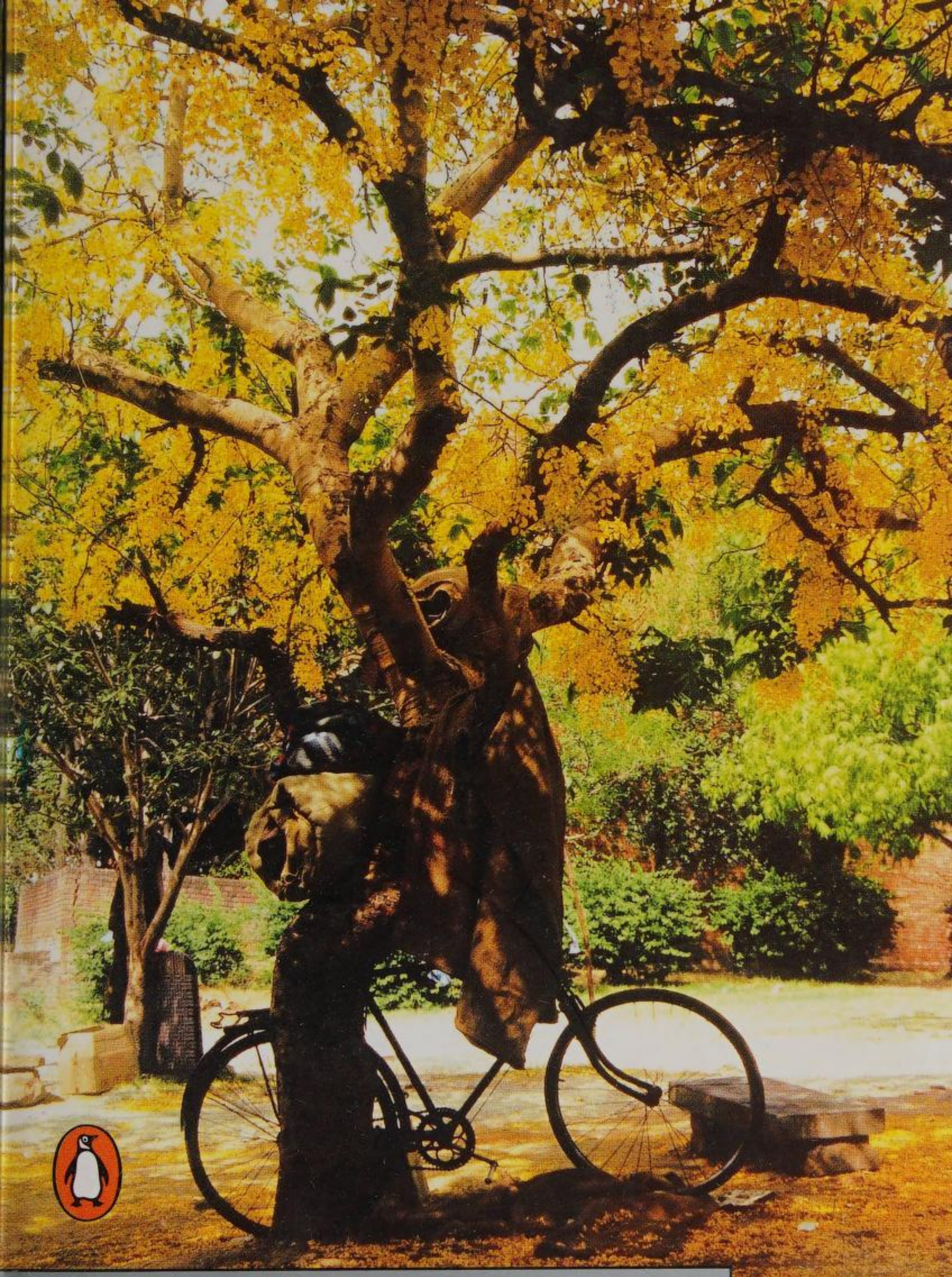


The Circle of Six Seasons

A Selection from Old Tamil, Prākrit and Sanskrit Poetry

SHOUT
SHARE
IT

PENGUIN BOOKS
THE CIRCLE OF SIX SEASONS

Martha Ann Selby is associate professor of South Asian studies in the Department of Asian Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the author of *Grow Long, Blessed Night: Love Poems from Classical India* and co-editor of *Tamil Geographies: Cultural Constructions of Space and Place in South India* (forthcoming). A recent recipient of grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Council of Learned Societies, she is completing a book on representations of women in the classical texts of Āyurveda, titled *Sanskrit Gynecologies: The Semiotics of Gender and Femininity in Sanskrit Medical Texts*.

THE CIRCLE OF SIX SEASONS

A Selection from Old Tamil, Prākrit and Sanskrit Poetry

Martha Ann Selby

PENGUIN BOOKS

Penguin Books India (P) Ltd., 11 Community Centre, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi 110 017, India
Penguin Books Ltd., 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, UK
Penguin Group Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10014, USA
Penguin Books Australia Ltd., 250 Camberwell Road, Camberwell, Victoria 3124, Australia
Penguin Books Canada Ltd., 10 Alcorn Avenue, Suite 300, Toronto, Ontario, M4V 3B2, Canada
Penguin Books (NZ) Ltd., Cnr Rosedale & Airborne Roads, Albany, Auckland, New Zealand
Penguin Books (South Africa) (Pty) Ltd., 24 Sturdee Avenue, Rosebank 2196, South Africa

First published by Penguin Books India 2003

Copyright © Martha Ann Selby 2003

All rights reserved

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Illustrations by Bina Guhathakurta

Typeset in Palatino by S.R. Enterprises, New Delhi
Printed at Chaman Offset, New Delhi

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior written consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser and without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise), without the prior written permission of both the copyright owner and the above-mentioned publisher of this book.

In memory of Dr S.S. Janaki
(1929–1999)

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements ix

Introduction xiii

POEMS

I. Summer *(Grīṣma/Gimha/Mutu-vēṉil)* 1

II. The Rains *(Varṣā/Pāussa/Kār-kālam)* 31

III. Autumn *(Śarad/Saraya/Kūtir)* 69

IV. Early Winter *(Hemanta/Hemaṃta/Muṉ-paṉi)* 93

V. Late Winter *(Śiśira/Sisira/Piṉ-paṉi)* 113

VI. Spring *(Vasanta/Vasaṃta/Iḷa-vēṉil)* 131

Bibliography 155

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Funds for my research in India were generously provided by the American Institute of Indian Studies, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Office of the Vice President and Dean of Graduate Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. I am very grateful to these institutions for their generous support, and I would particularly like to thank Elise Auerbach, Rick Asher and Pradeep Mehendiratta—all of the American Institute of Indian Studies—for their wonderful efficiency and their enthusiasm for all of my endeavours.

This particular project has a very long history behind it; in fact, my own relationship with the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*—the text that I have used to frame all of the poems in this collection—has been a long and troubled one. My recent re-entry into this particular literary genre represents a personal and intellectual cyclic return that ironically mimics the cycles of time represented in this volume. I began a translation of this text in earnest nearly eighteen years ago while a graduate student at the University of Chicago, where I read the first four sections (Summer, the Rains, Autumn, and Early Winter) with Donald Nelson, who

was at that time teaching Sanskrit in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, and I wish to acknowledge his help and encouragement. I finally returned to the text in the summer of 2000 and finished a full translation of the *Ṛtusaṃhāra* in June of that year. I also owe a huge vote of thanks to all of my new colleagues in the Department of Asian Studies at the University of Texas at Austin for their support and friendship, especially to Joel Brereton, Kathryn Hansen, Edeltraud Harzer, Syed Akbar Hyder, Patrick Olivelle and Sankaran Radhakrishnan and to the members of our marvellous poetry group, Robert Omar Khan, Susan Napier and Margherita Zanasi. Reading good verse aloud to each other over good food and wine has been one of the most pleasurable aspects of my life in Austin, and these three special friends have enriched my own appreciation of poetry and have served to remind me that poems are meant to be read aloud, shared and savoured in like-hearted company.

I also wish to thank George Hart for organizing a panel on the seasons in Indian literature for the annual South Asia Conference in Madison, Wisconsin, in the fall of 2000. George and the other participants—Vasudha Dalmia, Indira Viswanathan Peterson, and Diane Paull Mines—made me think a lot harder about this project. I also thank my dear friend Richard Serrano and the Transliteratures Project at Rutgers University for letting me try out my ideas on them and for so openly loving these poems as much as I do.

My thanks also go to Arshia Sattar for recommending me to Penguin Books India and to Raj Kamini Mahadevan, my editor, for her remarkable patience, vision and friendship. While in Chennai, I had the great

fortune of reading the more difficult verses of the *Śārṅgadharapaddhati* with Dr K. Srinivasan, professor of Sanskrit, Department of Sanskrit, Vivekananda College, while I was an affiliate scholar at the Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute. I owe a great debt to the institute, its staff and its acting director, Dr V. Kameswari, and to the staff and librarians at the Adyar Library and Research Centre, especially to Dr K. Kunjunni Raja for some early and crucial advice on sources. Dr Vijayalakshmy Rangarajan read many of the verses of the *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* with me during the summer of 2001, and I am indebted to her for her help and to our wonderful mornings of work on the veranda of her lovely home. My first teachers, the late Dr S.S. Janaki and the late Dr K. Paramasivam, read much of the Prākrit and Old Tamil poetry contained within these pages with me over the years. My debt to these two scholars, the best there ever were, is lifelong and profound, and it is to S.S. Janaki's memory that this book is dedicated. I miss them both terribly. My dear friends Daud Ali, Susan Branson, Lawrence Cohen, Richard Davis, Kaitlin Heller, Mini Krishnan and Shanti Pillai faithfully cheered me on all summer, and it was wonderful to have them all in Chennai during this time. I also thank Rustom and Mahazaver Dalal and Rodney and Chrystal Easdon for their hospitality and friendship. My warm thanks are also due to my resourceful and talented cook, Savithiri, for her delicious food, her loyal friendship and help with everything from questions about Tamil to hiring lorries.

As always, I thank my family for their forbearance, especially my daughter, Addie Hinson. I also owe a

great deal to my friend, Rick Halperin, for helping me keep it all in perspective and to John Higley for so tenderly bringing me back to life.

Martha Ann Selby
Austin, Texas
October 2002

INTRODUCTION

The theme of the six seasons was a great favourite of poets who composed verse in what we consider to be the primary languages of classical India for poetic production: Sanskrit, Prākrit and Old Tamil. The early texts from which I have gleaned poems for this book all date from the first century CE at the earliest until around the mid-eighth century at the latest, except for several of the later poems from the fourteenth-century Sanskrit anthology *Śārṅgadharapaddhati*, which includes verses from a rather vast range of Indian literary history and sources. I have chosen the scheme provided by the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*, the most famous example of this genre, to organize the poems in this book. Instead of beginning where most poets like to begin, in the spring, the *Ṛtusaṃhāra* begins at the onset of summer and ends with spring, and I have borrowed this pattern from the text for the successful narrative tension and suspense that it provides.

The seasons were not always six. In *Ṛtu in Sanskrit Literature*, V. Raghavan points out that even within the purview of a single text (in this case, the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*) the seasons are not articulated at all, that

is, counted as one or segmented into divisions of three, six, twelve, seventeen or twenty.[1]

Nor is poetry about the seasons limited only to works that we would normally classify as strictly literary, that is, as *kāvya* (poetry) or *nāṭya* (drama). Three early medical texts in Sanskrit—the *Caraka-saṃhitā*, the *Suśruta-saṃhitā* and Vāgbhaṭa's *Aṣṭāṅga-hṛdaya*—all contain delicate *anuṣṭubh* verses[2] in their *sūtra-sthānas*—the beginning chapters of the classical medical texts that delineate the fundamentals of early *Āyurveda*. All three of these texts set out prose prescriptions for behaviour, diet, dress, unguents and ornaments, bathing, and sexual behaviour followed by lavish descriptions of the seasons in *anuṣṭubh* verses. The most elaborate examples are found in the *Suśruta-saṃhitā*, which is not at all surprising since this text is at once more graphic and more floridly poetic in its descriptions of behaviour, diseases and remedies than the other texts on early medicine. Here, in my own very condensed translation of an extract from a lengthy poetic passage found in the *Suśruta-saṃhitā*, is a sensuous description of the rainy season that could have been composed by Kālidāsa or any other classical poet:[3]

---

1. V. Raghavan, *Ṛtu in Sanskrit Literature* (New Delhi: Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, 1972), p. 169.
2. A generic and historically very early class of Sanskrit meter requiring eight syllables per line in a four-line verse.
3. At least one extant Sanskrit manuscript of the *Suśruta-saṃhitā* contains the whole of the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*. The manuscript is owned by the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London, and I thank Dominik Wujastyk, associate curator for South Asian Collections, for telling me of its existence.

Suśruta-saṃhitā, Sūtra-sthāna VI. 24-36
At the onset of the rains,
packs of detached clouds,
spangled with lightning
and driven before gusts
of the western wind,
come thundering and envelop the skies.
The earth is robed in green
with her dense crops of corn,
brightened here and there
with the deep scarlet of rain mites.

Let us compare these lines with two lovely *vaṃśasthā*[4] verses from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra (A Circle of Seasons)*, a text that is often attributed to Kālidāsa and can reasonably be dated to the fifth century CE.[5]

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.5
prabhinna-vaidūrya-nibhais-tṛṇāṅkuraiḥ
samācitā prautthita-kandalī-dalaiḥ
vibhāti śukletara-ratna-bhūṣitā
varāṅganeva kṣitir-indragopakaiḥ

---

4. One of the simplest of the classical meters, consisting of four lines of twelve syllables each. The stress pattern is as follows:
   ⏑—⏑— —⏑⏑—⏑—⏑—

5. Siegfried Lienhard, however, claims that it cannot be Kālidāsa's but is 'from some anonymous poet's pen' and can be dated from anytime between 100 CE and the fourth to fifth century. Siegfried Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry: Sanskrit/Pāli/Prākrit* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984), p. 108.

Carpeted with budding *kandalī*[6] leaves,
the scarlet backs of mites that come with rain,
and with new grass gleaming like shattered agate,
the ground glitters like a gorgeous woman,
adorned with dark gems.

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.19
taḍil-latā-śakra-dhanur-vibhūṣitāḥ
payodharās-toya-bharāvalambinaḥ
striyaś-ca kāñcī-maṇi-kuṇḍalojjvalā
haranti ceto yugapat-pravāsinām

Hanging low with their burden of water
and adorned with rainbows and crackling lightning,
clouds, in league with women
gleaming with ear-jewels and cinches,
steal away the hearts of travellers.

There are many other verses in later anthologies that match these poems in tone and imagery, though they generally demonstrate greater emotional depth and complexity than the previous and historically earlier verses. The following poem is from the fourteenth-century anthology *Śārṅgadharapaddhati* and is attributed to the female poet Vijjakā. It is composed in *hariṇī* meter.[7]

Śārṅgadharapaddhati 3867
malina-huta-bhug-dhūma-śyāmair diśo malinā ghanair
avirala-tṛṇaiḥ śyāmā bhūmair navodgata-kandalaiḥ
surata-subhago nūnaṃ kālaḥ sa eva samāgato
maraṇa-śaraṇā yasminn ete bhavanti viyoginaḥ

---

6. *Aneilema nudiflorum*, a vascular plant with flowers that vary from blue to white.
7. A seventeen-syllable meter with the following pattern of stress: ⏑⏑⏑⏑— — — — —⏑—⏑⏑—⏑—

The directions are tarnished by clouds,
made blue-black with smoke
from sooty ritual fires.

The earth has turned dark green
with dense grass
and with freshly sprouted shoots.

The season good for sexual pleasures has come,
when separated lovers
seek refuge in death itself.

Seasonal Description as Literary Genre

That poems composed in this genre of seasonal description (*ṛtu-varṇana)* show up in other texts besides various anthologies of poetry and drama gives me pause, especially when we take into account the uniqueness of the *Ṛtusaṃhāra* as a discrete text. Aside from Durlabha's mid-sixteenth-century *Ṛtuvarṇana* and two later works, both titled *Ṣaḍṛtuvarṇana*,[8] the *Ṛtusaṃhāra* is the only surviving Sanskrit text devoted to this type of description. This leads me to speculate on the genre of *ṛtuvarṇana,* not necessarily as a genre of literature in the traditional sense, but rather as a generic way of thinking about time—time as it is articulated by poets and writers in a transgeneric fashion.

As a unitary work, the *Ṛtusaṃhāra* is not very good; it is a very dull piece of poetry indeed. There are some lovely verses in the text, to be sure, and I include in this book the best ones, but the poem as a whole is quite tedious and filled with repetitive imagery and

8. The first is by Vararāja from the mid-seventeenth-century, and the second is by Viśveśvara and dated to the beginning of the eighteenth century. Lienhard, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

language. The *Ṛtusaṃhāra*, however, is intriguing for other reasons, and I have always been troubled by its nature and purpose. It is the only surviving text of its kind until the sixteenth century, but there is a great deal of other literature that requires seasonal description as a part of generic convention. Moreover, being able to compose such poetry was deemed a necessary part of the classical poet's repertoire. In his *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*, Rājaśekhara prescribes an ideal domicile for a poet: 'He should have a spacious house and garden, offering accommodation suited to each of the six seasons of the Indian year.'[9]

Seasonal descriptions also appear in texts such as Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*, in terms of kingly activity in passages concerned with the times of year appropriate to expeditions, and so forth.[10] In the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Bharata describes 'how each of the six *ṛtus* has to be represented by the *abhinaya* [portrayal] of the characteristic marks, dress, activity and appearance of people or things in each *ṛtu*.'[11] These references do not come as a surprise. In the *Arthaśāstra*, it is all a matter of kingly strategy and pragmatics; in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, it is an issue of aesthetics and life-like representation in drama. Yet striking is the fact that such verses also appear in early Sanskrit medical literature, where one would think that lyric poetry, in contrast to mnemonic verse, would matter very little. There appears to be a link between the *Ṛtusaṃhāra* and medical literature in general. While at work on the

---

9. A.K. Warder, *Indian Kāvya Literature*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972), p. 171.
10. V. Raghavan, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
11. Ibid., p. 94.

sūtra-sthāna of the *Caraka-saṃhitā,* I remember excitedly jotting down the remarkable similarities in seasonal descriptions between it and the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*. While doing further research on *ṛtu* poetry for this volume, I came across a few stray passages in various books and articles in which other authors had remarked upon this relationship as well. V. Raghavan notes that

> [t]he human system and activity as governed by the *ṛtus* is a subject coming under health and medicine and from early times, *ṛtu-sātmya* [suitable diet and health regimens according to seasonal characteristics] has been dealt with in the texts of *Āyurveda*. These ideas of health and wholesome behaviour, appropriate mode of life, indoor or outdoor activity, dress, and make-up, food and drink, bath, sex, all these also provide the material for *Ṛtu-kāvya*.[12]

It was not until I began my own study of *Āyurveda* that I was able to understand fully the differences between the two winter seasons in terms of trying to fathom the slight differences in poetic cues in the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*. The medical texts group the six seasons in two sets of three, beginning with *śiśira, vasanta* and *grīṣma* (late winter, spring and summer) and ending with *varṣā, śarad* and *hemanta* (the rainy season, autumn and early winter). The first group of three is qualitatively characterized as hot and dry. The sun is dominant, and these seasons are said to be debilitating in nature to the human body. The second group of three is qualitatively described as cold and wet. The moon is

---

12. V. Raghavan, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

dominant. These seasons are soft and juicy and said to be invigorating for humans. And sure enough, the subtle changes in habit and dress described in the fourth and fifth cantos of the *Ṛtusaṃhāra* reflect to a certain extent the prescriptions and proscriptions found in the medical literature.

I am convinced that it is not all that important to be concerned with the sources for the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*. Other scholars claim that Kālidāsa must have had the Prākrit anthology *Gāthāsaptaśatī* in front of him while scratching out this text, and the list goes on from there. What all these texts represent, however, is an interesting picture of how the passing seasons were viewed in general in early classical India. Texts in Sanskrit and Prākrit from a variety of genres that range between the first and fifth centuries CE manifest a remarkably homogeneous picture of bodily practices that were linked with seasonal change. The ebbs and flows of sexuality as they are portrayed in the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*, in fact, exactly reflect *Āyurvedic* proscriptions against engaging in sex in the heat of summer. The poems in the canto devoted to summer have very little to do with sex but a lot to do with the world outside the boudoir—forest fires, the suffering and confusion of thirsty animals, and the horrible dusty dryness are described in nice detail. These are, of course, loose allegories for delayed human desires (thirst, suffering and longing), but there are hardly any allusions to intercourse to be found.

The seasons themselves also have characteristics other than what we find in the standard descriptions of flora and fauna. They have *rāgas*, for instance, but that is to be expected. Each of the six seasons also has its own colour, according to the changing colours of

the sun throughout the year. Spring is tawny, summer is gold, the rainy season is white, autumn is soft white, and the sun is coppery in early winter and scarlet in late winter.[13] Each also has *varṇa* (colour) in terms of class. Some *brāhmaṇa* texts construct the seasons as three and call spring the 'brahmin season', summer the *'kṣatriya* season' and autumn the 'season for *vaiśyas*.'[14] The seasons are also mapped onto the body of the bird of the altar of the Vedic ritual, and other *brāhmaṇa* texts identify the seasons with parts of a single day, an interesting poetic compression of an entire year into a mere twenty-four hours: sunrise is spring, forenoon is summer, noon is the rainy season, the afternoon is autumn, and sunset is late winter. (The *brāhmaṇa* texts occasionally understand the year as being fivefold, as is the case here.)

But the question remains: why is there poetry of this nature in the medical literature? What is its purpose, especially when we consider that the verses in question follow prose passages that convey the same material? Why reiterate the information in an embellished way in verse? Early Indian literature is quite fond of using the seasons in terms of making allegorical connections; the seasons also stretch themselves out over longer ranges of time, or they can be compressed within a single day.

The poeticization of time is what makes time tangible and human. The literary theorist Paul Ricoeur has written that 'time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a

---

13. Ibid., p. 27 ff. Here Raghavan is quoting from the *Samba-purāṇa*, 8.11-13.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 5. See also Brian K. Smith's *Classifying the Universe: The Ancient Indian Varṇa System and the Origins of Caste* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 178-81.

narrative'.[15] Poetry, after all, counts out time; the *Ṛtusaṃhāra* counts out a year in six segments. Ricoeur also writes about time's cyclicity: 'The circle of narrativity and temporality is not a vicious but a healthy circle, whose two halves mutually reinforce one another . . . reciprocity between narrativity and temporality.'[16] Poetry is time made visible. It is time measured out in syllables and instants. It is time embodied in language, in memory and in meaning itself. Ricoeur also remarks that 'time is refigured by narrative'.[17]

When thinking through the cyclic nature of the seasons in early Indian literature, I like to turn Ricoeur's model around a bit. Perhaps narrative is configured by time itself. These two statements, when taken together, speak to the reciprocity between time and narrative. When we think of the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*, or the seasons as they are poetically configured in Sanskrit medical literature, we see the seasons as an endless loop without the convenient Aristotelian beginning, middle and end. But what we do have is a lovely 'mimetic displacement'[18] in which medical texts and early works on poetry dialectically borrow from one another and mirror each other in fascinating ways. In other words, there are complicated textual dialogues of reciprocity in which ideas vacillate between medicine and poetry. These texts also reinforce ideas about the patternings of memory and expectation that come about in any sort of cycle. The concept of a cycle

---

15. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 3.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., p. 227.
18. This is Ricoeur's phrase. Ibid., p. 47.

serves as a powerful narrative impetus in the *Ṛtusaṃhāra* in terms of seasonal change and human reflection in moments of past and future activity, or stretched out over the ideal *Āyurvedic* lifespan of one hundred years. It is this narrative cycle that makes the loop of time possible—there are climaxes and dissolutions, multiple dyings and reanimations—but never a true beginning or end. These seasonal narratives seem to teeter between memory and expectation. Each verse in the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*, each proscription in prose or in *anuṣṭubh* in the medical *saṃhitās* is situated in a constant present that includes a simultaneous past and future, based on a poetics of practice tied to time. Raghavan also beautifully writes of this collapsing of time in his own work on the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*:

> Each verse is a vision of the lover's eyes, an articulation of his love-laden heart, so that its fringes are sensitive and vibrant with the overtones of a recollection or a prospect: The recollections or prospects, expressed or implied, are of situations and modes of their [the couple's] enjoyment; with each season, the milieu changes, but the enjoyment continues.[19]

What is poetry doing in medical literature? It not only aids memory but also condenses and sharpens lived experiences. It makes them richer, giving them density and colour via mimetic displacement. And what is the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*? It is more than just a collection of second-rate, tiresome, repetitive Sanskrit verse. I have come to see it not as a poem but as a poetic template.

---

19. V. Raghavan, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

I do not believe that it was written with the intention of it being a discrete *kāvya* in the mind of the author. Raghavan suggests that there is an intimate link between the *Ṛtusaṃhāra* and Kālidāsa's *Śākuntala*. Both texts begin in the dry, hot, asexual summer and end in springtime, or, to quote Raghavan, who firmly believed that the *Ṛtusamhāra* was Kālidāsa's earliest effort,

> Of this festival of life, there is no beginning and no end. What does it matter where one begins? Kālidāsa, no doubt, had his own fascination for summer. . . . [T]he last and greatest work of Kālidāsa, like his first, begins with summer and ends with spring.[20]

All this has reinforced my own ideas about this little text. I think that Indian and Western scholars have misunderstood the purpose and nature of the text and have heaped rather unfair judgements upon it because they have been attempting to classify it as a *kāvya* in the same sense that the *Kumārasambhava* and the *Raghuvaṃśa* are *kāvyas*. In my estimation, this text is a sketchbook at worst—sometimes the individual verses, especially the bad ones, feel like immature experiments—but at best it is a grammar of time. In his *Vākyapadīya*, Bhartṛhari writes that the seasons are important for 'knowing time,' and for a poet's—or any writer's—ability to mark out its phases. Poetry, after all, thickens the ordinary, gives it a semiotic density and tacks it down to time. To 'know time' is to know the everyday; to know the everyday is

---

20. Ibid., pp. 58 and 73.

comfort; to know the everyday poetically is to get it all down by heart:

> Civilization hoops itself,
> so does man, and things return,
> at any rate, they move in cycles.
> Day follows night and is followed by day,
> the seed follows the tree and must come out of it;
> it is cyclicity that consoles a man in misery.[21]

The Classical Anthologies

Aside from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra,* the other Sanskrit text from which I have taken examples is the *Śārṅgadharapaddhati* (*Śārṅgadhara's Poetry Manual*), a voluminous collection of verse. The collection itself dates from the fourteenth century and represents the work of 264 poets.[22] Siegfried Lienhard dates the text more precisely to 1363 CE.[23] The 1915 Nirṇaya Sāgara Press edition contains 4689 verses divided into 163 *vrajyās* (sections) devoted to specific topics. The *vrajyās* devoted to *ṛtuvarṇana* occur rather late in the text. The poems begin with descriptions of the spring season, and follow in order through late winter, occupying *vrajyās* 133 through 138. The poems are individually numbered in Peter Peterson's edition,[24] beginning at number 3783 and

---

21. Shankar Mokashi Punekar, trans., *Kālidāsa's* Ṛtusaṃhāram: *The Cycle of Seasons* (Bombay: Sigma Publications, 1966), p. 13.
22. Arthur Berriedale Keith, *Classical Sanskrit Literature* (Calcutta: Association Press, 1923), p. 125.
23. Lienhard, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
24. Peter Peterson, ed., Śārṅgadharapaddhati: *Being an Anthology of Sanskrit Verses Compiled by Śārṅgadhara.* (Bombay: Nirṇaya Sagara Press, 1915; reprint, New Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 1987).

ending at number 3948, totalling 166 poems in all. Each seasonal *vrajyā* is divided into topical subsections, consisting of charming descriptions of the winds, festivals, sports and games, and travellers on the road in various climates and amorous situations. The poems in each *vrajyā* are also arranged in terms of their metrical complexity. In general, the easiest and shortest verses come first, with the degree of intricacy and line length gradually increasing until the final verse in each subsection.

I have drawn my Prākrit examples from two anthologies of *gāthās*, the *Gāthāsaptaśatī* (700 *Gāthās* or *Songs*) and the later *Vajjālagga* (*The Composition Characterized by Topical Sections*). Both of these collections have come down to us undated, but it is generally accepted that the couplets of the *Gāthāsaptaśatī* were collected by one man, Hāla, a king of the Sātavāhana dynasty who ruled from 20 to 24 CE in Pratishthana (modern-day Paithan in central Maharashtra). Though the *Vajjālagga* is definitely a later collection, it shares eighty-two of its couplets with the *Gāthāsaptaśatī*. A.K. Warder,[25] Lienhard,[26] and other scholars place its compilation at some point in the mid- to late-eighth century CE. The medieval commentator Ratnadeva names Jayavallabha, a Jaina monk from the Śvetāmbara sect, as the *Vajjālagga's* compiler. The text as we now have it consists of 789 couplets, and like the Sanskrit *Śārṅgadharapaddhati*, it is divided into topical *vrajyās* and contains six *ṛtuvarṇana* sections, ranging in order from spring through late winter. As in the *Śārṅgadharapaddhati*, these couplets occur late in the text

---

25. A. K. Warder, *Indian Kāvya Literature*, vol. 5 (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972-1988), p. 81.
26. Lienhard, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

and occupy *vrajyās* 66 through 71, totalling thirty-one poems in all, plus six interpolated stanzas included in M.V. Patwardhan's edition.[27] The *Gāthāsaptaśatī* follows a much more random arrangement but contains many poems based on seasonal themes and descriptions.

For the Old Tamil examples, I have turned to quite different anthologies, *Kuṟuntokai* (*A Collection of Short Verse*) and *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* (*Five Hundred Short Poems*). The title of the *Kuṟuntokai* reflects the length of the poems, which are four to nine lines long. It contains 402 poems representing the work of 205 poets and dates from some time between the first and third centuries CE.[28] The compiler of this anthology is named in a colophon as Pūrikkō, about whom nothing is known, and no patron is mentioned. The *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* is a fourth-century anthology consisting of five groups of one hundred poems each. The poems vary from three to six lines in length. Each century focuses on one of the five *tiṇais* (landscapes) of reciprocal love prescribed by the *Tolkāppiyam*, an ancient work on Tamil phonology, grammar and poetics. The anthology itself was commissioned by a Cēra dynasty king, Yāṉai-k-kaṭ Cēy Māntaraṇ Cēral Irumpoṟai. The actual compiler is identified in the colophon as Pula-t-tuṟai Muṟṟiya Kūṭalūr Kiḻār. This text is unique among the eight Old Tamil anthologies in that it presents the work of only five poets. Each poet composed one hundred poems on the poetic landscape in which he was considered a virtuoso.

---

27. See *Jayavallabha's* Vajjālaggaṃ, compiled by Jayavallabha with an introduction and English translation by M. V. Patwardhan (Ahmedabad: Prākrit Text Society, 1969).
28. Takanobu Takahashi, *Tamil Love Poetry and Poetics* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), p. 52.

These two Old Tamil anthologies are quite different in that the *Kuṟuntokai* exhibits poems that rely on brief narrative to achieve poetic effect, whereas the poems of the *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* rely on a high, almost crystalline symbolism to allow audiences to imply their various contexts. Although the Tamil poets were not concerned with seasonal description in as direct a manner as poets composing in Sanskrit and Prākrit, there are seasons explicitly associated with several of the five landscapes, and I have chosen examples from these two anthologies that explicitly manipulate seasonal imagery in order to evoke a specific *uri* (mood).

The Seasons in Sanskrit, Prākrit, and Old Tamil Poetry: Comparative Perspectives

The cultures of north and south India, first of all, have both long agreed upon the divisions of the year, understanding it to be divided up into twelve lunar months, which are then paired up into six seasons. The Tamils have accepted the six-fold division of the year since the time of their early medieval commentators and grammarians. (The *Tolkāppiyam*, the earliest extant text in the Tamil language, composed in layers between the second century BCE at the very earliest, and the fifth or sixth centuries CE at the latest, understands the seasons as fivefold.) What is interesting, though, is the ways in which the seasonal divisions are understood in Sanskrit and Tamil and the importance these divisions play in evoking moods and emotions in early love poetry.[29]

---

29. Prākrit poetry follows the Sanskrit system, but the use of seasons in Prākrit poetry is for an entirely different sort of aesthetic effect.

Throughout this book, I have used the cycle and divisions of the Sanskrit seasons as an organizational principle, though I have had to do so with a bit of caution. In north Indian culture, there is a distinct summer, followed by the rains, an autumn, then two winters (early and late) and finally by a spring season that is celebrated quite joyously by many Sanskrit poets. The Tamil seasons naturally follow the same flow of time, but they reflect the hotter southern climate by eliminating spring and including instead two summer seasons, *iḷa-vēṉil* (literally, 'the time of young heat', the Tamil months of *Cittirai* and *Vaikāci*, corresponding to the English months of April-May and May-June, respectively) and *mutu-vēṉil* (literally, 'the time of ripe heat', the Tamil months of *Āṉi* and *Āṭi*, corresponding to the English months of June-July and July-August, respectively). The *Tolkāppiyam* describes a fivefold seasonal scheme, but many *caṅkam* poets, as well as later literary commentators, thought the seasons to be six and understood a clear division of *vēṉil*, (hot season) into the two *vēṉils* of young and mature heat; for our purposes spring and summer. Although culturally *iḷa-vēṉil* is celebrated widely as a great time of religious festival—in fact, the famous *Cittirai* Festival in the temple city of Madurai is often casually referred to as the Spring Festival—the spring season is not given nearly the attention in Old Tamil poetry that it receives at the hands of poets composing in the Sanskrit and Prākrit languages. This difference makes for some fascinating divergences in the ways in which time is used to evoke feeling across the three classical languages, as the examples below illustrate.

The opening verse of the Sanskrit *Ṛtusaṃhāra* begins with a warning, in a sense. An urbane man addresses

his beloved, telling her that it is simply too hot to make love, echoing advice put forth in the earliest texts on medicine in Sanskrit. He says:

> Darling, the summer has arrived,
> along with its scorching sun
> and sought-after moon.
>
> The water's gone from all the bathing,
> so let us enjoy the twilight
> while passion is becalmed.

In the twenty-seven verses on summer that follow, the narrator describes for his lover various scenes of natural description, in which dried forests burn in horrible conflagrations and animals are so thirsty and addled by the heat that they forget how they are supposed to behave, mistake their natural enemies for friends or mistake clouds of smoke from forest fires for monsoon clouds and bolt off after them in search of water. Take, for example, the following poem:

> *Ṛtusaṃhāra* I.11
> Scorched by the burning sun,
> their palates parched by dire thirst,
> the deer have run off to far forests,
> mistaking the kohl-dark skies for water.

A humorous verse from the *Śārṅgadharapaddhati* (#3835) develops this popular theme of confusion even further:

> The buffalo takes refuge
> in the shadow of its own hulk
> as if it's mud.

The crow caws out
at a clump of oozing, toxic berries
as if it's carrion.

The snake glides out of its hole,
unable to bear the heat, and slithers up
the trumpeting, waving trunk
of the best among the elephants.

These poems are quite interesting not only for their lovely and unique descriptions of nature but also for the fact that they are set in the erotic context of deferral. The desire that the narrator feels for his lover is displaced onto the burning, sizzling landscape, and all of the various descriptions of thirst, confusion, and torture are actually thinly veiled metaphors for his own necessarily unquenchable desires. The *Śārṅgadharapaddhati* also includes several lovely poems that use seasonal imagery not for erotic purposes but for didactic ones, as in the following verse:

#3836
Melted by the sun's rays,
    a deer resorts to a stunted tree,
just as a good man,
    his fortunes ruined,
resorts to a scoundrel
    out of desperation.

A similar sentiment is echoed in a Prākrit verse on summer from the *Gāthāsaptaśatī,* somewhat more succinct and to the point, since Prākrit rules of verse composition require a much briefer format—the couplet—than the usual Sanskrit verse form, the quatrain:

Gāthāsaptaśatī II.36
Fabulous riches to a miser
are as useless
as his own shadow to a traveller,
grilled to a turn by summer's heat.

Perhaps it is because of this brief format that Prākrit poems give off a bit more of an emotional punch than do the longer poems in Sanskrit. Compare, for instance, the long, humorous poem in Sanskrit on heat-addled animals (page xxx) with this shorter verse on the same theme:

Gāthāsaptaśatī VI.51
Thinking, 'Mountain stream!'
a heat-addled buffalo
licks a snake with its tongue.
Thinking, 'Cascade sprouting from black granite!'
the snake laps up
the buffalo's slobber.

Or consider this quick anthropomorphic sketch of a wild fire in summer:

Vajjālagga 664
Having burnt it all to ash
along with every animal,
the wild fire
shins up a dried-out tree
and surveys the forest again,
wondering what is left.

When we step inside the rich terrains of classical Tamil poetry, we encounter quite an aesthetic shift. In Tamil poetics, the effect—the *uri*—of a poem is what drives its composition, and the summer season is

fundamentally connected with a particular poetic *tiṇai* associated with love in abject separation. (There are five landscapes of reciprocal love in classical Tamil convention.) The landscape is *pālai,* that of the desert, and all of the *pālai* poems are, with some exceptions that I take into consideration in my introductions to the poems themselves, implicitly (and often explicitly) set in dry, desert wastes in summer and at high noon. There are multiple contexts of separation in this setting, including a mother's lament as her daughter elopes across the desert tracts with her illicit lover, a wife speaking to her husband as he is about to depart in search of wealth, a husband's lonely thoughts of his wife when he is away from home, and the wife's thoughts, wondering if her love has forgotten her as she languishes at home. Here are the words of the latter as the lonely wife addresses an older friend:

Kuṟuntokai 154
Having left me, friend,
how could he know it?
He's gone to those scrubby flats
of the harsh desert,
where a dove with freckled down on her nape
takes tiny steps and thinks of her mate,
who had flown off in search of prey
at that time when the shimmering heat rises up
like the sloughed skin of snakes.
Staying behind, she glitters on the fine branch
of a spurge bush with its baked roots
and splitting green fruit,
keening in her loneliness.
How could he know the strength it would take
to stay so far away?

The Tamil poets, who were just as confined by convention as were poets composing in Sanskrit (and, to a much lesser degree, in Prākrit, wherein imagery is manipulated to provide the educated audience with quick, suggestive echoes of alternative meanings rather than with slower constructions of moods and flavours), perhaps had a bit more freedom for improvisation. Their understanding of *tiṇai* articulations was quite fluid, for instance; neither were they as confined by external considerations of structure to the degree that their Sanskrit counterparts were. Though Sanskrit poets had far greater freedom in metrical choices (the way in which a Sanskrit poet could lengthen a poem was to lengthen individual lines rather than by adding them), poets composing in Tamil could set out ideas in either a shorter, suggestive fashion or a longer, narrative one simply by adding or subtracting lines.

There are, however, larger issues of conventional classification and processual aesthetics. In Sanskrit convention, the seasons were generally classified as *uddīpanavibhāvas* (stimulative determinants), things that give rise to the ultimate aesthetic goal of *rasa* (aesthetic savour) in the Sanskrit system of meaning production. As Daniel H.H. Ingalls writes, 'The stimulative determinants in the erotic [flavour] will be such factors as the springtime, gardens, or a bridal chamber; in tragedy, such factors as separation from dear ones, death, or capture.'[30]

---

30. Daniel H.H. Ingalls, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson and M.V. Patwardhan, trans. *The* Dhvanyāloka *of Ānaṅndavardhana with the* Locana *of Abhinavagupta* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 16.

In Tamil convention, the seasons are aesthetically categorized in a much different way. The basic elements of Tamil poetry are condensed in a three-part system, wherein time is given pride of place, as it were. The seasons in Tamil literature are intimately linked to place, in fact, in the first layer of conventional divisions first articulated in the *Tolkāppiyam*, the category of *mutaṟporuḷ* (first things) in which *nilam* (place) and *poḻutu* (time) are understood to incorporate the canvas on which poetic compositions are arranged. Later grammars and commentators make a distinction between 'time types,' bifurcating time into the further divisions of *perumpoḻūtu* ('big time' or season) and *ciṟupoḻutu* ('small time' or time of day).

In *Tamil Love Poetry and Poetics*, Takanobu Takahashi writes that 'the importance of the season appears to vary from *tiṇai* to *tiṇai*'.[31] The contexts in which the seasons are aesthetically crucial are three out of the five *tiṇais* that depict reciprocal love: *pālai, mullai* and *kuṟiñci* (the landscapes of desert, forest and mountain).

◆

I wish to close my introduction with a brief meditation on aesthetic process. After many years of reading erotic verse in these three languages, I have come to understand differences in how meaning is produced from the standpoint of the poet; not that I have any special advantage over any other scholar, but I wish to write in a speculative vein for a moment as a poet rather than as a scholar.

---

31. Takahashi, ibid., p. 57.

It seems to me that Sanskrit poets composed towards a goal, that of *rasa*, the universalized experience of the flavour of a poem that is constructed through a careful and quite deliberate assemblage of well-chosen elements. The composers of Prākrit *gāthās* constructed their poems toward the goal of an effect—the challenge of making a Prākrit couplet was to pack as much suggestive meaning as possible into an abbreviated two-line stanza. But for a Tamil poet, the task seems quite different. The *uri* of a poem is the only element in which a poet had no fluidity of choice. The *Tolkāppiyam* tells us that *uri* is fixed to a particular landscape but that all other elements may vary. I have come to view Tamil poems as precipitates of mood in many ways—mood gives rise to a Tamil poem in a process that runs in a direction that would perhaps be counter-intuitive to a Sanskrit poet, who inhabited a world of convention wherein poems give rise to mood.

It is my sincere wish that my readers revel in and savour my translations: may you all travel gently through the perils of summer and be rewarded for your travails with the refreshing delights that spring will offer you in the concluding section of this book.

I. SUMMER

Grīṣma/Gimha/Mutu-vēṉil

This section on the summer season begins in the same vein as the *Ṛtusaṃhāra* itself, with general descriptions of the heat, here at various times of day, beginning with noon (I.1 and I.2) and moving on to twilight (I.3) and midnight (I.4). Poem I.5, from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*, is a beautiful depiction of the moon, male in Sanskrit poetic convention and in grammatical gender alike, as an embarrassed peeping Tom. Poems I.6-I.8, all from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*, are vivid descriptions of young women in summer as they trade in their heavy garb for thin, cool cloth and offer themselves to their lovers. The moon, pearl strings, sandal paste and other cosmetic unguents are all said to cool down the body. Here the women cool themselves, and as they enter into embraces, they cool down their men as well.

Poems I.9-I.11 are didactic verses. These vivid poems from the *Śārṅgadharapaddhati* are typical of poems of this genre from this late Sanskrit anthology. Poems I.12-I.16 are all fine examples of how poets composing in Sanskrit and Prākrit anthropomorphize the fire of a forest conflagration as an all-consuming marauder, as a lover and as a horrible tormentor of animal life.

The three richly complex poems that follow (I.17-I.19) are from two early Tamil anthologies, *Kuṟuntokai* and *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu*. Poem I.17 is spoken by a girlfriend

of the heroine to the hero as she tries to convince him to take his beloved with him as he sets out on a journey across jungles and tracts of wasteland. In the first three lines, the girlfriend likens the heroine to a beautiful but strong lily, indicating to the hero that she has enough stamina for the trip and will be of great aid and succour to him on his path. Poem I.18 is also spoken by the girlfriend, chastising the hero for leaving his wife and simultaneously indicating to him that his wife is now pregnant. Poem I.19 is spoken by the heroine's mother. The young, indulged girl has eloped with her lover, and the mother, pining in separation for her daughter, describes what she imagines as their path across the desert, likening the lover to a bull elephant as it anticipates the approaching monsoon.

Poems I.20-I.28 are all descriptions of animals suffering horribly in the heat. Poets seem to favour two modes of depiction: the heat's addling effect on animals (verse I.20, a Prākrit *gāthā*, is a particularly humorous example of this mode, and typical of the wit and turnabout imagery that characterizes good Prākrit poetry in general), and the forgetting of predatory behaviour between natural enemies (poems I.23, I.24, and I.26, all from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*, are especially fine examples of this). These sorts of poems are, of course, thinly veiled metaphorical comments on human sexual desire and comportment as well.

Poems I.29 and I.30, both from the Tamil anthology *Kuṟuntokai*, are spoken by a bereft heroine. The first is a beautiful meditation on the heroine's own plight as her lover searches for wealth along hot desert paths—note

the stunning imagery in the central part of the poem, unusual even for the most gifted among *caṅkam* period poets. In contrast, poem I.30 is much more bitter and despairing in tone.

Poems I.31-I.36 are all depictions of travellers in summer. The first poem in the series, a lovely descriptive verse from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra,* leaves it to the reader to decide whether the sun is the culprit for the misery of the wayfarers or if it is only their longing. Poems I.32 and I.33 and spoken by seductresses on the hero's path; I.34-I.36 are all culled from a decad of the Tamil anthology *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* titled *iṭai-c-cura-p-pattu* (*The Ten on the Middle of the Desert*). All three poems are spoken by the steadfast hero as he comforts himself with memories of his beloved. Poem I.37, also from *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu,* but from a later decad, announces the same hero's happy return home to his beloved. The final two poems of this section are benedictory stanzas. Verse I.38 is a Prākrit poems in praise of summer's erotic uses, and I.39 is directed at the reader. Each of the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*'s six cantos ends with such verses, and I follow suit for the remaining five segments.

I.1 At noon in summer,
scorched by the touch
of the oppressive sun's rays,
the trees now shriek
with shrill chirps of crickets.

Gāthāsapataśatī V.94

◆

I.2 When the Sun, that Lord of Day,
is exactly at mid-heaven,
as if afraid of his relentless heat,
Shade herself pursues the shadows,
taking to the ground beneath the trees.

Śārṅgadharapaddhati 3835

I.3 Darling, the summer has arrived,
along with its scorching sun
and sought-after moon.
The water's gone from all the bathing,
so let us enjoy the twilight
while passion is becalmed.

Ṛtusaṃhāra I.1

◆

I.4 In the summer midnights,
lovers resort to lovely perfumed terraces,
to wine rippled by the sighs
from their beloveds' mouths,
and to a passion-rousing song
played on a fine lute.

Ṛtusaṃhāra I.3

I.5 At night,
the moon stares longingly
at the sweetly sleeping faces
of women in white palaces,

but at dawn,
he blanches as if shamed.

Ṛtusaṃhāra I.9

◆

I.6 Now, young girls, their breasts and spirits high,
their armpits filled with sweat,
cast off their heavy clothing
and drape their bosoms with gossamer.

Ṛtusaṃhāra I.7

I.7 Breezes from fans moist with sandal,
offerings of round pearl-strung breasts,
and soft lute song
all awaken Somnolent Love today.

Ṛtusaṃhāra I.8

◆

I.8 With their gourd-like hips
adorned with cinches and bark cloth,
their sandal-smeared breasts
strung with jewels and necklaces,
and with their hair
scented with tonics used for bathing,
women soothe the fevers of their lovers.

Ṛtusaṃhāra I.4

I.9 The earth is scorched
like the thoughts of a bereft lover.
Thirst grows in travellers
like a fortune in a miser's palm.
The sun burns with its rays
like a low man with harsh words,
and like a good wife,
shade never strays
from the heel of a man's foot.

Śārṅgadharapaddhati 3824

◆

I.10 Fabulous riches to a miser
are as useless
as his own shadow to a traveller,
grilled to a turn by summer's heat.

Gāthāsaptaśatī II.36

I.11 Melted by the sun's rays,
a deer resorts to a stunted tree,
just as a good man,
his fortunes ruined,
resorts to a scoundrel
out of desperation.

Śārṅgadharapaddhati 3836

◆

I.12 Having burnt it all to ash
along with every animal,
the wild fire
shins up a dried-out tree
and surveys the forest again,
wondering what is left.

Vajjālagga 644

I.13 Its hue as bright as the vermilion
of newly opened saffron,
fire has seared the ground everywhere,
its speed intensified
by the haste of the violent wind
as it's caught up in embracing twigs
and the tips of creepers.

Ṛtusaṃhāra I.24

◆

I.14 Fanned by the wind,
the conflagration blazes in mountain chasms,
crackles in stands of sere bamboo,
races through the grass
as it reaches its full force
and touching the edges of the woods,
wearies herds of deer.

Ṛtusaṃhāra I.25

I.15 Everywhere, wind-fanned fire,
growing even stronger
in the groves of silk-cotton trees,
glitters in the hollows,
and leaping to boughs
clustered with dry leaves,
spreads throughout the woods.

Ṛtusaṃhāra I.26

◆

I.16 Elephants, oxen and lions,
their bodies overheated by fire,
have assembled like allies, setting aside enmity.
Forced from the underbrush
by the torment of the blaze,
they rest near a river with broad sandbanks.

Ṛtusaṃhāra I.27

I.17 Though battered by western winds,
the blue lily with its rows of petals
will not fade, its roots bound in water.
Standing in rows like salt sellers' carts
yoked with oxen exhausted
from straining against
their sling-like harnesses,
elephants don't have the strength
to strip the trees of their dying branches,
but just fold up their trunks and suffer.
But if she comes along with you,
even the jungles will grow sweet.

Kuṟuntokai 388

◆

I.18 You long for a journey
across the bleached desert in the hottest month.
But is this wealth that you go to make
better than seeing the smile
of the first-born son
of that woman who lives to love you,
O Lord of the land of tall mountains?

Aiṅkuṟunūṟu 309

I.19 She refused to drink her milk.
She didn't want her ball,
and would just play games
with her girlfriends. But now,
does she think that running off with him
down treacherous paths would be so easy?
The roads are lined with stands of sere bamboo,
where a bull elephant gores a toothbrush tree
for its dried boughs
with his upturned tusks,
then listens for the sharp sound
of pattering rain
at the bottom of summer's baked foothills.

Kuṟuntokai 396

◆

I.20 Thinking, 'Mountain stream!'
a heat-addled buffalo
licks a snake with his tongue.
Thinking, 'Cascade sprouting from black granite!'
the snake laps up
the buffalo's slobber.

Gāthāsaptaśatī VI.51

I.21 Summer has seen
the bottom of the pond
as it's never been seen before:
its catfish and tortoises
fried by the heat;
its thick muck dried to stone.

Gāthāsaptaśatī V.14

◆

I.22 Scorched by the burning sun,
their palates parched by dire thirst,
the deer have run off to far forests,
mistaking the kohl-dark skies for water.

Ṛtusaṃhāra I.11

I.23 Scorched by the sun's rays
and by the hot dust in its path,
its head downcast
and its movements contorted,
a cobra lies panting
in the shade of a peacock's feet.

Ṛtusaṃhāra I.13

◆

I.24 His heroics undone by great thirst,
his mouth agape and panting,
the lion will not kill elephants
although they are nearby.
He merely lolls his tongue
and gives his mane a shake.

Ṛtusaṃhāra I.14

I.25 Scorched by the sun's rays
and foaming at the mouth,
crazed by intense thirst and needing water,
elephants don't fear even the lion.

Ṛtusaṃhāra I.15

◆

I.26 Burned by the sun's garland of fiery rays,
a frog springs up from murky pond water
and rests in the shadow of a thirsty cobra
as it uses its hood for a sunshade.

Ṛtusaṃhāra I.18

I.27 The lustre of its crest-jewel
glinting in the sun's glare
and gulping air by flicking its forked tongue,
a cobra, confounded by thirst
and scorched by the heat of the sun
which has fire as its poison,
won't kill a single frog.

Ṛtusaṃhāra I.20

◆

I.28 Birds pant as they perch on naked trees,
weary monkeys search for shade
in mountain groves,
oxen stumble about in need of water,
and *śarabhas* head straight for the well to drink.

Ṛtusaṃhāra I.23

I.29 Having left me, friend,
how could he know it?
He's gone to those scrubby flats
of the harsh desert, where a dove
with freckled down on her nape
takes tiny steps and thinks of her mate,
who had flown off in search of prey
at that time when the shimmering heat
rises up like the sloughed skin of snakes.
Staying behind,
she glitters on the fine branch
of a spurge bush with its baked roots
and splitting green fruit,
keening in her loneliness.
How could he know
the strength it would take
to stay so far away?

Kuṟuntokai 154

I.30 They say that his path
through the harsh desert
is full of hills,
where the swift winds
blow hot and strong
through the branches
of the sirissa tree,
rattling its dried nuts
in their rotting pods.
He must hate that space between my breasts.

Kuṟuntokai 39

I.31 Travellers, their hearts seared
by the fires of separation from their lovers,
cannot see even the earth,
parched by the sun
and obscured by whirls of dust
blown up by fierce winds.

Ṛtusaṃhāra I.10

◆

I.32 Look:
Because she fears the noonday heat,
even Shade cowers under our bodies
and won't come out, not even a little.
Traveller, why not rest for a while?

Gāthāsaptaśatī I.49

I.33 In the months of summer,
the sun's splendour is harsh:
it blocks all directions,
scorches plants,
vents its anger on antelopes,
withers the trees,
slows down the bees,
is furious at any jasmine that dares to bloom,
dries up the rivers,
scorches heaps of dust,
and brings oceans to a boil.
And as you wander, O traveller,
how can you live?

Śārṅgadharapaddhati 3854

I.34 Even if I pass over many hills
where strange tongues are spoken,
or through cool jungle spaces,
where a chisel-beaked female kite,
her head moulting,
flies to a lush branch
atop a spreading toothbrush tree
and keens in her loneliness,
her virtues will not leave me,
will not vanish,
that girl with the gleaming bangles.

Aiṅkuṟunūṟu 321

I.35 Before,
my way through the desert tracts was hot,
as the heat wore on
and dried the tall bamboo
and the brutal rays of the sun
baked stone to the point of splitting.
But now,
each time I think of that bright-browed girl,
my path grows cool.

Aiṅkuṟunūṟu 322

I.36 In that desert
where stands of looming bamboo
bake in the sun
and tiny-eyed elephants
roam without brushing the ground,
afraid of scorching
their creased and freckled trunks,
even on such harsh paths,
the virtues of this great woman
keep me fresh.

Aiṅkuṟunūṟu 327

I.37 Though the sun's brilliance made my way long,
and my path was eaten by its heat
hotter than fire itself,
it was easy:
My desire-filled heart
longed for your touch,
and goading on the swift horse
that pulled my chariot,
I thought of you as I came,
your glance that of a great deer.

Aiṅkuṟunūṟu 360

I.38 You dry up the ditches,
help leaves to sprout in arbours,
make trysts simple to arrange,
and you're the very touchstone
of Fortune's own gold:
O Summer, may you never end at all!

Gāthāsaptaśatī VII.26

I.39 May you while away your summer
in the company of lusty women,
make use of pearl strings,
moonbeam necklaces,
and baths in soothing water,
delight in the smell of trumpet flowers
and ponds blanketed with lotus clusters,
and spend your nights in comfort on rooftops
where the singing is seductive!

Ṛtusaṃhāra I.28

II. THE RAINS

Varṣā/Pāussa/Kārkālam

This section, quantitatively the longest in this book, contains many fine representative examples of poems from all three languages, set in the context of the rainy season. The monsoons have been a favourite theme for poetic composition throughout South Asian literary history. The ranges of emotion are vast, but the classical poets primarily used the imagery of rainy weather to depict the two main moods of love poetry, love-in-union and love-in-separation. The monsoons are the ideal time for lovers to be together—it is impossible for husbands and lovers to travel at this time—but for that very reason, it is also equally impossible for travellers who are late in returning home to reunite with their lovers. The banishing of the heat by the rains is also widely used as a metaphor for the burgeoning of sexual desire, followed by gratification and release.

Poems II.1-II.7 describe the onset of the rains, and the simultaneous revivification of the earth, forests and animals after the baking and oppressive heat of summer, creating an atmosphere of freshness, renewal and fertile potential. Verse II.1, from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*, is spoken by a lover to his beloved, announcing the return of the rains, likening it to the pageantry that accompanies the return of a vanquishing king. Verse II.2, also from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*, describes the forest's delighted response to the new showers. Verse II.3, an

unusual composition from the *Śārṅgadharapaddhati,* describes the sun as a vandal. The clouds track the sun down in order to banish him as they spread over the sky in their search. Verse II.4, a Prākrit *gāthā,* contains a delicate and rather atypical central image. Verses II.5-II.7, all from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra,* are particularly fine general descriptions of the greening of the forests and the confused delight of animals and insects. A Prākrit *gāthā,* verse II.8 is a stunning portrait of a peacock drinking rainwater and one that underscores the genius of the early Prākrit poets. In the original language, the verse is in asymmetrical couplet form, but the poet manages to depict the slow and elegant movement of the bird as he extends his neck to drink, in spite of the brevity that form and meter require.

Poems II.9-II.24 all contain dramatic and quite inventive imagery used to describe clouds as they attempt to bind the earth with their cords of rain (II.9), use the Vindhya hills as a mooring place (II.10), and are likened to a mortally wounded, roaring buffalo (II.11). Verse II.12, an innovative composition from the *Śārṅgadharapaddhati,* describes the sky as it uses the clouds as a blanket to shroud itself against the cold rain. Poems II.13 and II.14, both from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra,* are exquisite descriptions of animals as they delight in and welcome the clouds. Poems II.15-II.19 portray the anxieties of lovers in varying degrees, using cloud imagery to maximum effect, and poems II.20-24 use clouds and rain as rich domestic metaphors for pregnancy and domestic life. Verse II.20, from the Tamil anthology *Kuṟuntokai,* is spoken by a heroine of the

mullai (jasmine) context, that of patient waiting for the lover's return. The conventions of this context generally require authors to employ rain imagery in a forest setting. Verse II.21, from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*, likens the clouds to the swollen, darkening breasts of pregnant women, while verses II.22 and II.23, both from the *Śārṅgadharapaddhati*, contain fabulous images of domestic scenes that are built on initial appearances of the monsoon clouds. Verse II.24, a highly complex poem from the Tamil tradition, also employs pregnancy metaphors to describe the clouds, as a girlfriend reassures the heroine that her lover will return as soon as the cloud cover lifts and moves upland.

Verse II.25-II.28 use cascades, swollen rivers and floods as bases for their imagery. In verse II.28, a Tamil poem and perhaps the most emotionally intense piece in this entire section on the rainy season, a despairing heroine describes lovers who are literally separated by a deluge and, to emphasize her own desolation, compares her lover (or perhaps herself) to a solitary peacock stranded on a branch in a rising flood.

Poems II.29-II.35 all offer descriptions of amorous women in the rains. In a way the first verse in this set, a Sanskrit composition from the *Śārṅgadharapaddhati*, is an anti-description (a common trope—or anti-trope—in early Sanskrit and Prākrit erotic lyric), indicating that the glances of women playing on swings (in the rain, we can imply, since this sort of activity is intimately connected with this season) are so fetching that only the Love God (Kāmadeva) would be able to do them justice. Verse II.30, also from the *Śārṅgadharapaddhati*,

paints a very different portrait of poor housewives, who are careworn and waiting in emotional and material destitution for their husbands to return at the very beginning of the monsoon. In verse II.31, from the Tamil tradition, a girlfriend alludes to the heroine's irresistible charms. The remaining poems here, all from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*, best typify descriptions of women in love within the more standard world of Sanskrit poetic convention.

Poems II.36-II.43 all depict degrees of the agony of separated lovers in the rainy season, conventionally the most horrible of all of the times of year to be alone. Verse II.37 is spoken by a lonely hero to a cloud, commanding it to spare his fragile beloved. Verses II.38-II.40 are all beautiful Prākrit *gāthās* that describe the anguish of wives as they wait for their husbands to return. The last three poems of this sequence are from the Tamil anthologies. In verses II.41 and II.42, a heroine voices her despair to a confidante; verses II.43 provides the hero's perspective, where he states that his king and the rains are doing their jobs well, but that grieving in separation is his own private, nightly task.

Verses II.44-II.46, again from the Tamil tradition, celebrate the hero's return. II.44 and II.46 are spoken by the confidante to the heroine, announcing to her that her lover has returned. Verse II.45 is the joyous proclamation of the returned hero. This section ends with a benedictory verse from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*.

II.1 The rain has returned in haughty splendour
as would a king:
Its mist-laden clouds
are like elephants in rut,
it has for its banner, lightning;
for its drum, the rumble of thunder
and is dear to lovers, darling.

Rtusamhāra II.1

◆

II.2 Its fever broken by the spray of fresh water,
the forest is moved to laughter by *ketakī* buds,
dances with its tree branches
jostled by the wind
and shows its delight by blossoming
with a profusion of *kadambas*.

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.23

II.3 'He has shortened the nights
and plundered the streams
of their waters.
Heating the entire earth,
he's completely withered
dense thickets of trees.
Where has that sun gone now?'

The water-giving clouds,
looking for him,
travel in every direction,
using lightning as their torch.

Śārṅgadharapaddhati 3869

◆

II.4 Where is the sun's disc?
Where have the moon and stars fled?

The season etches a line of cranes
in the sky
like a horoscope.

Gāthāsaptaśatī V.35

II.5 Carpeted with budding *kandalī* leaves,
the scarlet backs of mites
that come with rain,
and new grass gleaming like shattered agate,
the ground glitters like a gorgeous woman
adorned with dark gems.

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.5

◆

II.6 Adorned with budding trees and
with young shoots of grass champed by deer,
its colour mottled green,
the Vindhya forests charm our thoughts.

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.8

II.7 Their buzzing charming the ear,
greedy bees abandon a lotus
stripped of its blossoms and leaves,
and fooled, alight on the tail medallions
of dancing peacocks,
thinking that these are new blooms.

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.14

◆

II.8 During the rains,
a peacock stretches his neck
to drink a drop of water
clinging to a tip of grass

like a pearl impaled
on an emerald needle.

Gāthāsaptaśatī IV.94

II.9 Look,
the cloud groans with effort,
unable to hoist up the earth,
lashing it with cords
made from streams of new rain,
falling without cease.

Gāthāsaptaśatī V.36

◆

II.10 Thinking,
'Here is perfect respite for us,
heavy with our wet burden,'
rain-swollen clouds refresh with their mists
the Vindhyas, their fever caused
by the searing fire of summer's heat.

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.27

II.11 I think that the lightning spills out
like the tortured guts of a roaring cloud-buffalo,
pierced in its belly
by the curved end of a rainbow.

Gāthāsaptaśatī VI.84

◆

II.12 As if terrified of the cold
from the misty rains,
the sky huddles under a cloud-blanket
without a single hole.

Śārṅgadharapaddhati 3862

II.13 Hanging low
because they are heavy with water,
their thunder pleasant to the ear
and moving slowly while spitting rain,
the clouds are harassed for their water
by flocks of thirst-addled cuckoos.

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.3

◆

II.14 Wild elephants trumpet repeatedly
at the roar of new thunderheads.
Their cheeks shine like flawless lotuses
and are slick with ichor
and swarming with bees.

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.15

II.15 Rustling through *Ketakī, Arjuna, Sarja,*
and *Kadamba* groves,
scented by their flowers, and cool
through contact with mist-laden clouds,
what man does the breeze not worry?

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.17

◆

II.16 Hang on to her!
Don't be afraid:
This wanderer's wife
doesn't roam around
tortured by demons.
Her quivering heart's just panicked
by the sudden roaring of a cloud.

Gāthāsaptaśatī IV.86

II.17 High and heavy with water
and slowly buffeted by gentle winds,
iridescent rain clouds dark as night-lily leaves
rob wayfarers' wives of their minds,
confounded by separation from their husbands.

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.22

◆

II.18 Even during the nights made pitch-dark
by clouds thundering long and loud,
impassioned women
set out to meet their lovers,
their paths lit by lightning flashes.

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.10

II.19 Their hearts jarred by lightning
and by deeply rumbling clouds,
sleeping women cling tightly
even to lovers who are unfaithful.

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.11

◆

II.20 My eyes glowed without a hint of shame.
On that day, they gave in to him.
But now that the north wind blows cold
with its fine and ruinous raindrops
that make the tight buds
of the fat sugarcane fill out
like green snakes gravid
with ripening young,
he's gone, and they weep for him.

Kuṟuntokai 35

II.21 The whole sky is overcast with clouds:
Here, they resemble piles of crumbled kohl,
there, they are the colour
of dark blue lotus leaves,
and elsewhere have the purplish hue
of the breasts of pregnant women.

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.2

◆

II.22 Whose heart isn't gladdened by this?
The fickle water-giving clouds,
their beauty grey
with dust from the forests,
make the sky filthy
as if overrun by children.

Śārṅgadharapaddhati 3866

II.23 Seeing the sky with its masses of clouds
and pleasant rumbling sounds,
a hunter builds a wall with elephant tusks,
thatches his roof with yak tails,
seals his floor with camphor and musk,
and dozes on a lion skin,
his wife's arm flung over his chest.

Śārṅgadharapaddhati 3873

II.24 Listen, friend, and live long:
Having seen all this just now,
could your lover really forget you?

Like women in their first pregnancies,
craving raw tamarind
and unable to walk,
bearing their children for twelve months,
the clouds take on water and bear it,
without climbing to the sky.
But bearing it, they crowd together
and gaze at all those lush hills,
and those big, lumbering clouds
will rise up
when they are ripe.

Kuṟuntokai 287

II.25 Swiftly felling trees on every riverbank
with their turbulent waters,
rivers rush to the ocean
like aroused, wicked girls.

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.7

◆

II.26 Flowing downhill,
the pale, new water meanders,
full of grass, dust, and insects,

and as it crawls along its crooked path,
startled frogs take it for a snake.

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.13

II.27 Bathed everywhere by cascades,
their rocks kissed by clouds white as lotuses,
and abounding with peacocks
that have begun their dance,
the mountains arouse longing.

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.16

II.28 It is raining sweetly.
The showers blend with lightning
as it splits the hoods of cobras
while thunder swiftly roars in the forest
where the rains had stopped,
the bulls had grown lazy,
disdaining their ploughs,
and the deer languished.

In the impoverished evening
when separated lovers
stand in a downpour, paralysed,
and, in a widening space flooding with water,
a peacock perches alone on a blossoming branch
and keens with its eyes agape,
O friend, they're all such fools.

Kuṟuntokai 391

II.29 The beauty of eyes
like blue lotuses
flashing on swing
after swing—

If, out of grace
he ever becomes a poet,
the God of Love himself
will know how to describe it.

Śārṅgadharapaddhati 3877

II.30 Sealing the dust a little,
observed by flocks of curious peacocks,
broken by the breezes from the sighs
of impoverished housewives
wailing in their worn-out clothes,
and harbingers of a heavy monsoon,
these drops fall
from a new cloud,
and are moons
on the faces of lonely women
who have been robbed of all their beauty.

Śārṅgadharapaddhati 3872

II.31 Our artless girl lives
in a small town
in a glade heady with flowers
brimming with water
that trickles onto bushes,
which scatter cold drops
on the glistening, speckled neck
of a rooster crowing out his summons
in the woods.
But even if his chariot
trundles off to a different town
with business commissioned by a king,
it won't know how
to stay away from her.

Kuṟuntokai 242

II.32 Their hair hanging down around their flanks,
earrings fashioned from fragrant blossoms,
their breasts roped with pearls
and their mouths flavoured with rum,
women kindle passion in their lovers.

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.18

II.33 Now, women wear on their heads
wreaths woven from *kadambas*, new *kesaras*,
and *ketakī* blossoms
and in their ears whimsical ornaments
fashioned of flowers from the *kakubha* tree.

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.20

◆

II.34 Hearing the rumble of clouds at dusk,
women leave their elders' rooms
and hurry to their bedchambers,
their limbs smeared
with thick sandal paste and black aloe,
their luxuriant tresses
scented with floral wreaths.

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.21

II.35 Women wear pearl strings
on the high tips of their fine breasts,
gossamer cloth on their broad, round hips,
and stomach-down,
defined by a mist of new rain,
on their lovely furrowed waists.

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.25

◆

II.36 The directions are tarnished by clouds,
made blue-black with smoke
from sooty ritual fires.

The earth has turned dark green
with dense grass
and with freshly sprouting shoots.

The season good for sexual pleasures has come,
when those who are separated from their lovers
seek refuge in death itself.

Śārṅgadharapaddhati 3867

II.37 Go ahead and roar above me,
roar with all your might!
My heart is made of steel.

But Cloud,
don't you dare kill
that miserable wretch,
her little curls tumbling down.

Gāthāsaptaśatī VI.66

◆

II.38 Beholding the languishing wives of travellers,
the clouds shed tears,
only pretending to rain.

Vajjālagga 649

II.39 In that house damp with water
trickling through leaky thatch,
the wayfarer's bride
drenches every dry corner
with her floods
of relentless tears.

Gāthāsaptaśatī VI.40

◆

II.40 Bowing her head
over her little son,
she protects him
from the water trickling from the eaves,
wanting to drown in it herself.

But the wayfarer's wife
fails to notice
that she's soaking the child
with her tears.

Gāthāsaptaśatī VII.21

II.41 Evening has come.
The big rains have come in season,
reaching the mountainsides
ornamented with clouds,
where sturdy bull elephants
caress their mates with their trunks
and a buck hides himself
in a forest thicket
and mounts a virginal doe,
confusing her.

But that man who wrecked the good virtues
of my golden body
has not yet come.
What will befall my sweet life, O friend?

Kuṟuntokai 319

II.42 Look:
The toads are peeping
in every single marsh,
and everywhere above me,
flocks of birds are singing
with their rousing voices.
And so the rains have started.
Because of it, my large eyes
have begun to water,
for his chariot has not yet begun
to move an inch in my direction.

Aiṅkuṟunūṟu 453

II.43 In the morning
as the drum sounded
with its resonant voice,
the furious king met his task
and the season, too,
did its work with its drops pattering down
from swelling clouds
as jasmine opened
on the slopes of the loamy hollows.
And each time I think
of that girl with the fine, beautiful hair,
I take on the work of grieving
and cannot sleep.

Aiṅkuṟunūṟu 448

II.44 While the striped frogs croak
and the toads peep,
the rains have just begun.
And now he will be the monsoon guest
of your fine wrists
and ample shoulders.
Driving his tall chariot
with its tinkling bells,
our lover will come back today.

Aiṅkuṟunūṟu 468

II.45 O great Cloud,
now that you've roared, thundered and rained,
bless you:

You have flashed,
dispelling any remaining darkness.
You have scattered sweetness
with your falling drops
and have made it cool.
You've rumbled like a drum,
beaten with sticks in turn.

With my mind content
and all my work finished,
I am ready for this girl
as I lie on her soft bed
of fragrant, silky hair,
smelling of a pretty blue lily blossom
on its fragile stem.

Kuṟuntokai 270

II.46 As the rains fall heavily,
animals take to the bushes,
clumps of millet spread,
and all the great hills grow desolate.

O girl whose eyes are wide with worry,
that man who left you and stayed away
has come back to be a friend
to your shoulders.

So let your hair,
now full of budding flowers,
bloom as it desires.

Aiṅkuṟunūṟu 496

II.47 Delightful because of its virtues,
robber of women's hearts,
steadfast kinsman
to creepers, shoots and tree twigs
and the very life's breath of all who breathe,
may the rainy season grant your every wish!

Ṛtusaṃhāra II.28

III. AUTUMN

Śarad/Saraya/Kūtir

The poems that are set in the autumn months are remarkably consistent in imagery and in resulting mood. In the Sanskrit and Prākrit poems, the monsoon has ended, the skies have cleared, and the whole world is cool and washed clean, leaving poets with a fresh emotional canvas. The Tamil poems set in the autumn months are composed in the *kuṟiñci* (conehead flower) landscape, the one appropriate to love-in-union and more especially to love that is *kaḷavu* (stolen, clandestine) and not yet legitimized by formal marriage. These poems are set by convention in the hills, and even though the heavy rains of the monsoon have ended, the poets who composed poems in this context still drew on rainy, misty imagery set against the dense darkness of midnight.

The first five poems of this section are all constructed around anthropomorphic comparisons. Poems III.1 and III.2 liken the autumn to a new bride and to a wanton girl, respectively. Both poems anticipate the erotic possibilities of the season, while using delicate similes to detail its characteristics—the blooming of wild cane, the return of the geese to the waterways and the clear, cool nights bleached white with moonlight and full of stars. Verse III.3, a Prākrit *gāthā*, uses an unusual aging motif to describe the transition from the rains to autumn. The royal motif that was encountered in poem II.1 of the previous section is

reworked here in III.4, and III.5 carries a didactic force by employing sharp tactile description.

Verses III.6 and III.7 are exquisite descriptions of the autumn sky from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*, while verses III.8 and III.9, from the same text, play on one of the two primary colours of the season, the reddish pink that comes with the blooming of lotuses. The autumn season is also conventionally associated with the colour white, and poems III.10-III.15 all emphasize this colour with moon and water imagery. Poems III.10 and III.11, both from the Tamil anthology *Kuṟuntokai*, use moon imagery to maximum effect. In the first, a heroine speaks to a confidante of her intense devotion to her lover, of how she cannot bear to turn away from him, and in the second, a thwarted lover curses the moon, its bright light no use for covert midnight trysts. Verses III.12 and III.13, both Prākrit *gāthās*, employ artful similes from the material world, transforming white commonplace products—rice, salt, cotton—into vivid evocations of the season. Verses III.14 and III.15, both from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*, are superb examples of how Sanskrit convention configures the whiteness of autumn.

Verses III.16-III.22 are all evocations of male longing in various stages. Verses III.16 and III.22 are fine descriptions of grieving travellers; the intervening poems celebrate autumn's alternating intoxicating and exhilarating effects on men in love. The two verses that follow, III.23 and III.24, are standard descriptions of the season. In the former, stock elements of Sanskrit convention mimic and are animated by female charms. These are followed by three exquisite Tamil poems

from the *Kuṟuntokai*. III.25 and III.26 are both spoken by the heroine's confidante. In the first, she consoles her lovesick friend. In the second, she attempts to arrange a tryst with the hero; by pretending to describe the difficulties of the terrain to him, she is archly encouraging him to come under the cover of darkness while his beloved's family slumbers. In verse III.27, a lovesick heroine addresses her friend; in the first stanza, she alludes to a stone that marked the place of her secret meetings with her lover.

The final four poems on autumn present multifaceted portraits of love-in-union. In III.28, a verse from the Tamil anthology *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu*, a confidante encourages her friend to meet her lover. They will be found out, but their love made public will also bring about their union in marriage. III.29, a Prākrit *gāthā* that wonderfully encapsulates the humour in this tradition, blames a May–December romance on the maddening effects of the season. Poem III.30, another from the Tamil tradition, is the voice of a man in love: the indented section of the first stanza contains a thinly veiled reference to the couple's initial sexual encounter, and verse III.31 blesses the reader with all the beauties the season has to offer.

III.1 Autumn has come,
as pleasing in form as a new bride,
wearing wild cane as her upper garment.
Her pretty face is an opened lotus,
the entrancing sound of her anklets
the chattering of wild geese,
and her slender, vine-like limbs
beautiful ripening rice.

Ṛtusaṃhāra III.1

◆

III.2 Night lengthens as the days pass,
looking like a lusty girl
as she wears a host of stars as her best ornament,
bears moonlight as her spotless raiment,
and has as her face the moon
unblemished by clouds.

Ṛtusaṃhāra III.7

III.3 As the monsoon night's
lofty clouds slacken
like the high-set breasts of young women,
the bloom of wild cane appears
like Earth's very first grey hair.

Gāthāsaptaśatī V.34

◆

III.4 At times, the sky looks like a king
fanned by fine fly whisks,
and, white as silver conch and lotus threads,
its clouds are buffeted by the wind
and set in motion by the hundreds,
light now, relieved of their watery burdens.

Ṛtusaṃhāra III.4

III.5 Like the hearts of good men when riled,
the depths of wide lakes stay cool
in the autumn months
while their surfaces boil.

Gāthāsaptaśatī II.86

◆

III.6 The rainbow is lost in the bellies of clouds;
lightning, heaven's banner,
doesn't glitter today.
Cranes don't beat the sky
with wind from their wings
and peacocks don't look at it
with their heads upturned.

Ṛtusaṃhāra III.12

III.7 In autumn,
winds blow cool,
for they are touched by lotuses.
The quarters are beautiful,
for the flocks of clouds have gone.
Water is clarified,
Earth's mires have dried
and the sky is brilliant with stars
and the pure-beamed moon.

Ṛtusaṃhāra III.22

◆

III.8 Reddened with lotus pollen,
rivers everywhere
delight people with birdsong.
The water's garlands of waves
are broken by the bills of ducks,
and their banks are alive
with flocks of grey geese and cranes.

Ṛtusaṃhāra III.8

III.9 Ever rustling through white lilies
and pink and red lotuses,
the dawn wind becomes cool at their touch
and stirs an urgent longing in us
as it ripples the dew
clinging to the tips of leaves.

Ṛtusaṃhāra III.15

◆

III.10 He is from the lofty hills
where a falling white waterfall
resembles the reflection
of the rising moon
in the sea.

He is like the sun, O friend,
and my amply jointed shoulders
are like the cow's thorn vine,
its flowers always facing the sun.

Kuṟuntokai 315

III.11 For the secret meetings
of those who come at night
through the thick of the forest
where the blossoms
of the black-rooted kino tree
drift onto a round stone
and disguise it
as a stocky tiger cub,
you're no good at all,
O long, white Moonlight.

Kuṟuntokai 47

◆

III.12 His harvest abundant,
the rube breaks into song
in the autumn nights
when the deer-marked moon
is bleached as white
as newly threshed and pounded rice.

Gāthāsaptaśatī VII.89

III.13 Look, slender girl:
Like mountains of salt
and tufts of carded cotton,
pale clouds gleam in autumn
with all their rains released.

Gāthāsaptaśatī VII.79

◆

III.14 The earth is bleached white by wild cane,
the nights by the moon,
the rivers by geese,
the lakes by water lilies,
forests by dita trees heavy with bloom,
and groves are made pale by jasmine.

Ṛtusaṃhāra III.2

III.15 Today, rivers meander slowly
like impassioned women:
Their girdle strings are lovely darting fish,
their pearl necklaces rows of white birds
perched on their shores;
their gourd-shaped hips are broad sandy banks.

Ṛtusaṃhāra III.3

◆

III.16 Seeing in blue lotuses
the beauty of dark eyes
and in the *bandhujīva* flower
the gleam of their darlings' lower lips
and hearing in the cries of maddened geese
golden waist-strings jingling,
travellers weep now,
their minds reeling.

Ṛtusaṃhāra III.24

III.17 The gorgeous sky,
its colour like heaped-up kohl,
the Earth,
blushing with the crimson
of *bandhūka* blossoms
and the hillsides
with their lotus-covered plots:
Which young man's heart
do these not fill
with longing?

Ṛtusaṃhāra III.5

◆

III.18 With the ends of its gorgeous boughs
trembling in the gentle breeze,
its heaps of newly set blossoms
and tender petal tips,
and its ooze of honey
sucked up by maddened bees—
whose heart is not rent
by the *kovidāra* tree?

Ṛtusaṃhāra III.6

III.19 The wind confounds the minds of youths
in the same way that it shakes rice fields
bent with the weight of their harvest,
the finest of trees, bowed low with flowers,
and the lotus tank,
forested with full-blown blooms.

Ṛtusaṃhāra III.10

◆

III.20 Tantalizing with the scent of *śephālikā* flowers,
resonant with bird flocks,
their roosting undisturbed,
and having for lotuses
the eyes of does living at their borders,
arbours rouse desire in the hearts of men.

Ṛtusaṃhāra III.14

III.21 Men rejoice in the village outland,
its fields covered with harvest-ready rice,
splendid with many grazing, contented cows
and resonant with geese and flocks of cranes.

Ṛtusaṃhāra III.16

◆

III.22 In autumn
thirsty travellers drink
at the lake's clear white waters
spiced with the essence of blue lotuses
as if sipping from the faces
of their darlings.

Gāthāsaptaśatī VII.22

III.23 Geese master the sensual gait
of well-formed women,
budded lotuses the beauty of their moon-faces,
blue lotuses mimic their drunken gazes
and ripples the flirtatious movements
of their brows.

Ṛtusaṃhāra III.17

◆

III.24 Now women,
their hearts glad,
adorn the rounds of their breasts
with pearl necklaces and sandal paste,
the broad slopes of their hips
with girdle strings,
and their lotus feet
with the finest tinkling anklets.

Ṛtusaṃhāra III.20

III.25 What kind of love is this?
Live long, friend:

He is from those hills
where mature pepper vines
flourish on the slopes
and as heavy rains gush from clouds
and crash down in the night,
a bushy male monkey
prods at a jackfruit
reeking with flowers,
knocking it into a cascade
tumbling from a mountain,
and submerged,
the fruit is delivered to our ghat.

Though his touch has made
your soft shoulders thin,
it did bring you peace.

Kuṟuntokai 90

III.26 You won't see the sky.
It's obscured by patches of rain.
Nor will you see any land.
It's flooded by spreading water.
And since daylight has gone,
a lush darkness has set in.

So how could you come at midnight,
while many are asleep,
man from the high hills?
How might you know our little house,
fragrant with kino flowers?

I'll suffer.

Kuṟuntokai 355

III.27 He is from that place
where a round stone,
black and pitted,
lies in a green place,
resembling an elephant
washed clean of its dust
in a downpour.

He's made me sick, friend,
and my eyes,
once beautiful as lilies,
now brim only with pallor.

Kuṟuntokai 13

III.28 It's a rare chance for a lover
when there isn't a single cloud in the sky
to descend and be close at hand.

So, embracing him
as your choice jewels clatter,
tell him that you'll never be apart.

Let's get up and go to him.
Aiṅkuṟunūṟu 235

III.29 Look:
that the cucumber tendril
trails up even that old crooked tree
is the fault of autumn,
perfumed as it is
with attar of blue lotus.

Gāthāsaptaśatī VI.34

◆

III.30 Her shoulders ample,
she is the little daughter
of a man from the hills,
whose village
is on a many-flowered slope,
where a sparkling white waterfall
cascades from the tall mountain
and crashes through fissures in rock

and like water,
her softness has quenched
my fire-like strength.

Kuṟuntokai 95

III.31 Its face a blown lily,
its eyes opened blue lotuses,
wearing white garments
of spreading young wild cane
and its beauty enhanced
by water lilies,
may this autumn,
intoxicating as a lusty woman,
bestow upon your heart
total joy.

Ṛtusaṃhāra III.26

IV. EARLY WINTER

Hemanta/Hemaṃta/Munpaṉi

The poems devoted to the two winter seasons are quantitatively the fewest in number throughout the anthologies that I have surveyed for this volume. However, although these poems are somewhat scarce, they still convey subtle ranges of emotion, particularly those from the Tamil tradition, whose poets seem to have understood the differences in the two winters in a much more marked way than did authors composing on these themes in Sanskrit or Prākrit.

This section is devoted to poems set in the early winter, as the Sanskrit term *hemanta* is often translated, though 'wet winter' would be a better way to understand the subtle (and at times, aesthetically indiscernible) differences in the two seasons (*śiśira*, or late winter, is in fact dry winter). The Tamil term for this season is *munpaṉi* (literally, the time of early dew) and like autumn, this season is set in the *kuṟiñci* context, or that of love-in-union. *Muṉpaṉi* is used as a setting for the lovesick heroine to express her doubts to her confidante over whether her lover will return to her after their first passionate encounter.

I begin here with seven Sanskrit poems from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*. Poems IV.1-IV.4 are general descriptions of the season. In IV.2 and IV.3, the speaker likens the plants and the grass in winter to a woman who has gone pale with lovesickness and then to one whose

breasts have been handled too roughly, respectively. Poems IV.5-IV.7 are all lovely descriptions of the dress and cosmetic habits tied to this particular season of women in love; IV.7 is a particularly nice description of a woman sleeping in the morning after a long, arduous night of love making.

Poems IV.8-IV.12 all describe men in this season, beginning with their beguilement by the landscape in the first poem on this theme, also from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*. The next four poems are wonderful odes to fire and warmth. IV.9, a Prākrit *gāthā* from the *Vajjālagga*, is didactic in nature. IV.10, also a Prākrit poem but taken from an earlier anthology, describes a man as he stamps out a fire at a temple door. One commentator tells us that by doing so, he is erasing the evidence of an illicit tryst. Verse IV.11, drawn from the *Śārṅgadharapaddhati*, is a beautiful and humane Sanskrit portrait of an indigent traveller in winter, a man who has probably failed to make his fortune and therefore cannot yet return home to his wife. Though IV.12 is also a portrait of an impoverished man, the commentators on this Prākrit verse write that this *gāthā* was spoken by an elderly prostitute to a novice to teach her how to discriminate between poor and rich clients.

Verses IV.13-IV.18 are all from the Tamil tradition. In the first poem in this set, a confidante confronts the hero, begging him to stay on. As in verse III.30 from the autumn section, the indented segment of this typically enigmatic poem from the *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* is a veiled reference to the couple's initial sexual encounter, but also to the fragile and precarious nature of their

romance; here, the confidante is urging the hero to either stay back and marry her friend or suffer the consequences. The heroine herself speaks in poems IV.14-IV.18. In these verses full of rich, complex and highly suggestive imagery, the lovesick heroine expresses her doubts to her friend about her lover's return. Verses IV.16 and IV.17 are particularly evocative. The poets have used images of changes in the agricultural year to indicate that the hero's time for return is long past due—a second crop comes to fruit, and another goes to blossom on the vine as it is ravaged by deer. Verse IV.19, a benedictory stanza from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*, alludes to both the sensual pleasures of early winter as well as its romantic difficulties, here described as the 'robber of women's minds'.

IV.1 Early winter has come,
lovely with crops
and the sprouting of shoots—
the *lodhras* have bloomed, rice has ripened,
and lotuses have withered
in the new-fallen snow.

Ṛtusaṃhāra IV.1

◆

IV.2 Going ripe and constantly rustled
by snow-chilled winds,
the panic-seed vine pales
like a girl separated from her lover,
darling.

Ṛtusaṃhāra IV.10

IV.3 Its beauty approaching that
of swollen breasts,
and, as if it aches at being squeezed,
the cold season weeps
with fallen dew clinging to grass tips.

Ṛtusaṃhāra IV.7

◆

IV.4 Carpeted with fields of ripened rice,
adorned with herds of doe
and resonant with charming curlews,
the outlands disquiet the heart.

Ṛtusaṃhāra IV.8

IV.5 Women's arms are not graced
with bracelets and armlets;
neither does new gossamer
rest upon their gourd-like hips
nor upon their ample breasts.

Ṛtusaṃhāra IV.3

◆

IV.6 Women smear their limbs with sandal,
paint fragrant designs on their lotus faces
and scent their hair with black aloe
for the festival of sexual love.

Ṛtusaṃhāra IV.5

IV.7 Her body wearied from all the love making,
her lotus-eyes reddened
from staying up all night,
the bands of her braids loosened,
hair tumbling in waves over her shoulders,
another woman sinks into sleep,
heated by the sun's soft rays.

Ṛtusaṃhāra IV.14

◆

IV.8 Beautified by opened blue lotuses
and adorned with maddened geese,
lakes rob the hearts of men
with their cool and sparkling waters.

Ṛtusaṃhāra IV.9

IV.9 In early winter,
it's hard to tell what people like
or even what they hate.
Like the company of good men,
fire forever gives pleasure.

Vajjālagga 655

◆

IV.10 Look there:
at the door of the temple
in this dump of a village,
a traveller in early winter
stamps out
a guttering chaff fire,
slaughtering it
as if it's a fearsome bear.

Gāthāsaptaśatī II.9

IV.11 Inclining his face forward,
resonant with the clatter
of his chattering teeth,

blinking closed
his two eyes
brimming with tears,

rubbing away at his chills
and roughly crying out,
his arms outstretched for a moment,

it's as if the traveller
is drinking the public fire,
his moustache singed by flames.

Śārṅgadharapaddhati 3934

IV.12 In early winter,
we know a poor man
by his tattered garments
hanging by their threads,
turned a dun colour by smoke
and reeking with the sweet smell
of dung fire.

Gāthāsaptaśatī IV.29

IV.13 You won't come back to us;
that north wind is really cruel.
Please don't go back
to your land filled with mountains
where waterfalls crash down,
scraping precious sapphires
from the sides
of dangerous crags.
Aiṅkuṟunūṟu 233

IV.14 They say that the man
with the chest like a stony mountain
will go to the good land
where glory lilies
grow in fences
in the towering hills.

And as he goes,
I'll grieve, shivering
in this cruel season of early dew
when cold north winds
rustle the pointed leaves
of waving mountain kale,
caressing them
as if they're the ears
of stocky bull elephants.

Kuṟuntokai 76

IV.15 On his slopes,
men from parched hills
gather plump mangos,
their flesh wet and cool,
as they are shed,
their stems broken,
from fragrant trees
as the fruit drops
like hailstones in rain.

And if the man from that good country
comes back,
then, Mother, living out my life
might be possible.

Aiṅkuṟunūṟu 213

IV.16 He stood just behind me,
smoothing my long, curling hair
and telling me not to cry,
he would wipe clear my weeping eyes.

But now, friend, who has he become?

It is the harsh season of early dew
when fertile vines of field beans blossom
as a second crop after a scant millet harvest
for the hill-men of the vast dry tracts
on the slopes,
and he has not come.

Kuṟuntokai 82

IV.17 In this harsh season
of early dew,
when herds of deer
steal the aging crop
of black gram,
gone to blossom
on its stems
as red as the legs
of jungle quail,
there is no medicine
that will cure me
other than his chest
wedded to my own.

Kuṟuntokai 68

IV.18 He will not come even now,
when the big cold north wind howls
in midnight's dense darkness
as a nightingale,
its head red as fire,
sings with his mate,
her beak curved like a prawn,
in their nest in the looming branches
of a *taṭavu* tree,
and their cries
break the hearts
of those who are separated
from their lovers.

Is this how my lover
marries me, O friend?

Kuṟuntokai 160

IV.19 Delightful because of its many qualities
and robber of women's minds,
may this ever charming season of frost,
encircled by garlands of curlews
when the village outlands are crammed
with rich harvests of ripened rice,
grant you happiness.

Rtusamhāra IV.18

V. LATE WINTER

Śiśira/Sisira/Pin̲-pan̲i

This very brief section comprising poems on late winter begins with four general descriptions of the season, but all four are spoken from quite different perspectives. Verse V.1, from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra,* is the same type of address from a sophisticate to his lover that is found at the beginning of all six cantos of this little text. Here he describes and tempts her with the delights of late winter: the earth has now turned fully and literally white, completing the figurative bleaching of the landscape that had its beginnings in autumn; the seasonal whitening that begins with light and clarity (moonlight, cloudless skies after rain) and ends with substance (frost, the full ripening of rice and cane). V.2 is a playful verse—a rooster's clarion—from the Prākrit *Vajjālagga,* while V.3, also a Prākrit *gāthā* from the earlier anthology *Gāthāsaptaśatī,* is a lament sung by a lonely wife to her mother-in-law as she awaits her husband's return; autumn's lotuses have become the cropped sesame fields of winter, just as her ripening hopes have slowly been transformed into desiccated despair. I must note that this is my own reading of the poem. The main commentators predictably suggest that this is an oblique conversation between women over the sudden change of a particular trysting spot, said within earshot of the speaker's paramour. V.4, a fine Sanskrit verse from the *Śārṅgadharapaddhati,* is a

telling commentary on the differences between the lives of wealthy profligates and the homeless poor.

Poem V.4 very nicely sets the stage for the second grouping: poems V.5-V.10 are all depictions of men in winter. The late—or dry—winter may very well be the one season in which there are the sharpest contrasts in evoked emotion, perhaps because of the easy metaphors that the contrasts in comfort provide. Save for the Tamil poems, there is hardly any description of the outside world in winter. Verses V.5-V.7, all from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*, describe men as they resort to the interiors of their homes, shunning the cold nights and all their cooling attributes, so welcome in the summer months. Poems V.8-V.10 take us back outdoors. V.8, a Prākrit *gāthā*, is spoken by a senior wife. According to a sixteenth-century commentator, she addresses the poem to her husband, who has been focusing all of his affections on a nubile co-wife. The senior wife obliquely compares herself to a serviceable, durable shawl that is warm in winter—what good is an ox against the cold? Verses V.9 and V.10 are both from the Tamil tradition. Both poems are spoken by men who are situated within the *pālai* (desert) context, that of abject separation. Most *pālai* poems are set in the scorching heat of summer, but there are a few that are set in season of *piṉ-paṉi*, (late dew; the Tamil analogue to the Sanskrit late winter). The contrasts of warmth and cold, damp discomfort are used to great effect. In V.9, the hero acknowledges the cool beauty of his path, but he cannot appreciate it or enjoy it—everything seems hot and dry to him without his lover. V.10 is an

address by the hero to the north wind, a poem reminiscent of the messenger-poem genre that was popularized by Sanskrit writers; Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* is the most well known.

V.11 and V.12 are beautiful Sanskrit descriptions of the cosy, warm sensuality of lovers in winter as they turn to each other's bodies to fend off the cold. The next six poems are portraits of women in winter; the first three are from the Sanskrit *Ṛtusaṃhāra*, and the last three are from the Tamil anthology *Kuṟuntokai*. As a set, these poems throw into high relief the differences in convention in these two traditions. The Sanskrit verses (V.13-V.15) depict women in a kind of sensual winter languor, while the Tamil poems (V.16-V.18) bespeak abject misery in separation. Verse V.16, spoken by the heroine's foster mother (who often acts as the heroine's confidante), explicitly compares the heroine's suffering to that of her doll, left out in the cold mists of the season. Verses V.17 and V.18 are spoken by the heroine to her confidante, both beautifully evocative examples of the despair that *pālai* elements can produce. Verse V.19, the usual benediction from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*, spells out many of the seasons' pleasures, but also fleetingly alludes to its pains.

V.1 O woman of choice thighs,
hear now of the season called late winter,
when the earth is heaped
with mature rice and cane
and rings with the cries of curlews
nesting in some places;
when desire is at its zenith,
dear to bold women.

Ṛtusaṃhāra V.1

◆

V.2 Hey, thieves:
Run away!
And you lovers:
Quick now, have your fun!
And you poor wretches and wayfarers:
Hurry on home!
The nights are growing shorter!
So crows out the rooster.

Vajjālagga 658

V.3 O Mother-in-law,
the lovely cluster of lotuses—
that ornament of our village—
has been turned into
a plot of cut sesame
by late winter's cold.

Gāthāsaptaśatī I.8

◆

V.4 Fended off by cloaks, embers,
by the inner chambers of their homes
and by the sloping breasts
of their beloved women,

the cold is reviled
among high-born men,
so it assails the beggars.

Śārṅgadharapaddhati 3937

V.5 At this time,
men take to the bellies of houses,
their shutters latched,
and to glittering fires,
the sun's rays,
heavy clothing,
and tender young women.

Rtusamhāra V.2

◆

V.6 Neither sandal paste chilled in moonlight
nor terraces washed clean
by the autumn moon
nor winds cooled by dense mists
can now please the minds of men.

Ṛtusaṃhāra V.3

V.7 Men do not resort to the nights,
chilled as they are by the thick falling of snow,
made cooler still by the rays
of the hare-marked moon
and dimly bejewelled by a host of pale stars.

Ṛtusaṃhāra V.4

◆

V.8 A low man
will trade his shawl
for an ox
in the dead of late winter,
looking at the breasts
of that dusky girl
as if they're smokeless embers.

Gāthāsaptaśatī III.38

V.9 Even though my path is cooled
by a fine, falling mist
and is carpeted with fragrant blooms,

it is hot to me
who have passed
through a forest full
of leafless, arid groves,
leaving behind my woman,
my sweet companion.

Aiṅkuṟunūṟu 328

◆

V.10 Protect her, North Wind,
and live long:

The good woman's village
is full of huts thatched with bamboo.
There are herds of elk
crunching on myrobalans
in the front yards.
It's that place marked
by the tall mountain
where a sparkling white cascade
resembles the pendulant slough
of a snake.

Kuṟuntokai 235

V.11 Their chests embraced by their mistresses
whose breasts are stained dark gold
with vermilion dye,
lovers drowse, conquering the chill,
aided by the steam of fresh youth
to be gleefully enjoyed.

Ṛtusaṃhāra V.9

◆

V.12 The door of the house is shut.
A fire blazes at the side of the bed,
and upon it, there's a heavy quilt
and a wife with a willing body
under the sway of passion.

So what can the cold do to *this* sleepyhead?

Śārṅgadharapaddhati 3940

V.13 Their breasts squeezed tight by fetching bodices,
chests shawled in colourful silken cloth
and with their tresses braided with flowers,
it's as if women
are ornamenting winter's arrival.

Ṛtusaṃhāra V.8

◆

V.14 At night, gladdened women
drink the best wine
with their lovers,
heart-stealing wine that intoxicates
and causes passion to bloom.

Their fragrant breaths
make blue lotuses quiver.

Ṛtusaṃhāra V.10

V.15 Pained by the burden of their heavy hips,
their waists slightly bent
from the tiring burden of their heavy breasts,
other tender women,
moving very slowly,

quickly shed their clothes
worn for love making at night,
trading them for dress more suitable for day.

Ṛtusaṃhāra V.14

V.16 She listens
as her playmates
tell her to end the suffering
of her doll made of pollen,
since it's languished in the cold mists
since early morning.

But this girl suffers much
from her plaything's brand of agony.

Isn't it possible that her lover
could say the one word
she so wants to hear,
that one word
that could remove
the pallor on her good brow?

Kuṟuntokai 48

V.17 Live long, my friend, and look:
That man who left us,
fixed on fleeting wealth
and crossing the craggy forests
where big flocks
of long-legged *kaṇantuḷ* birds
with pretty wings
nest close to the path
and warn travellers on the road
of hunters so that armies
can escort them to a safer place,
even if we'd told him not to go
as he stood before us,
that we'd die of the cold,
he'd have gone even then,
wouldn't he?

Kuṟuntokai 350

V.18 Covering the sky to obscure it
and thundering like those many good drums
beaten by victorious kings,
the clouds won't give up their raining.

Our lover is in a far-off land.
He isn't thinking of us.

What will we do, O friend,
in these harsh days of cold
that stretch ahead of us
as the colourful, silken blossoms
of the mimosa tree
fade away and die?

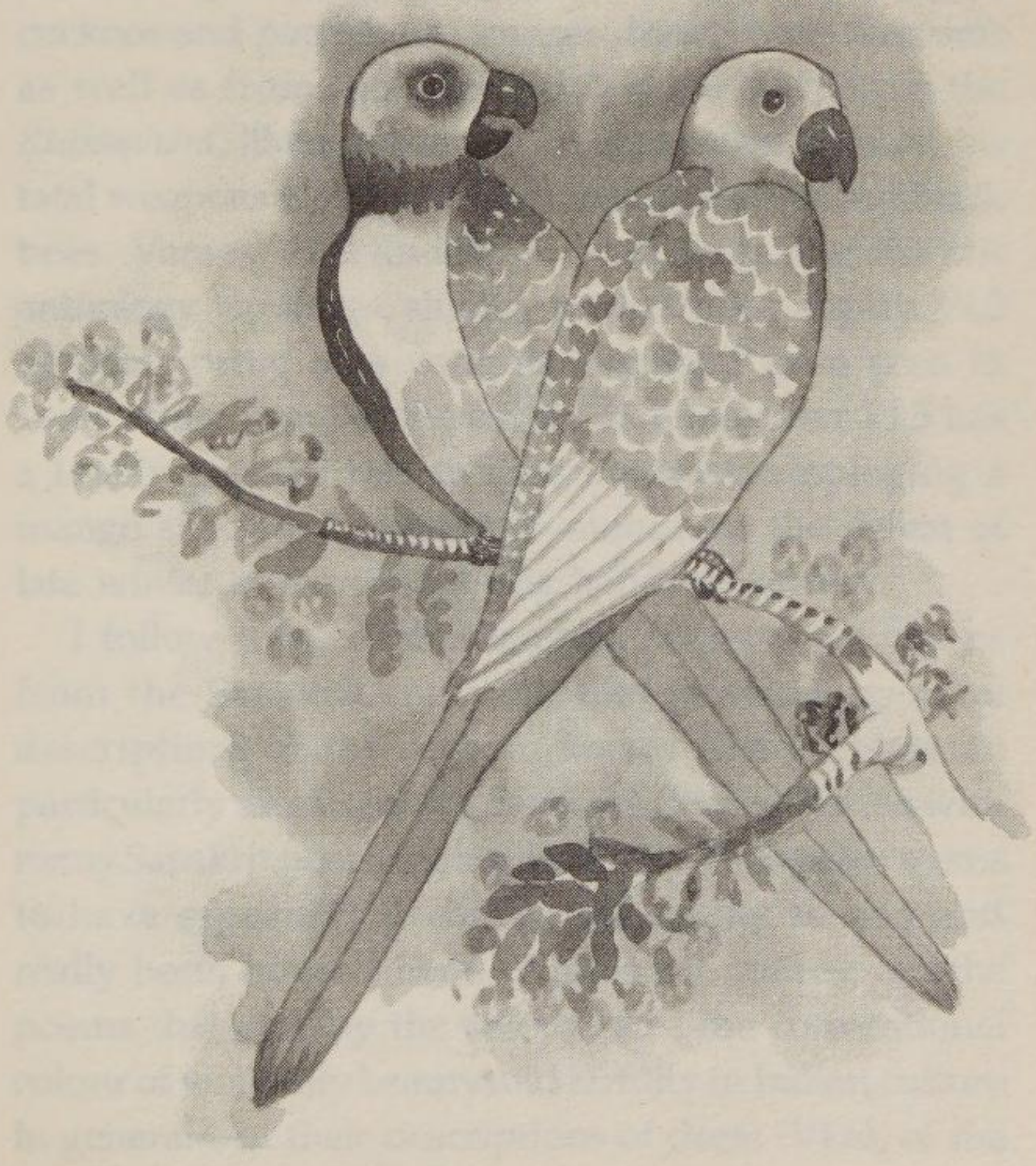
Kuṟuntokai 380

V.19 With sweet confections in plenty
and its pleasing sweet rice and cane,
when there is much sexual play
and the insolence of the God of Love is born,
the cause of the fire in the minds
of those deserted by their lovers,
may this late winter season
make you more prosperous.

Ṛtusaṃhāra V.16

VI. SPRING

Vasanta/Vasaṃta/Iḷa-vēṉil



In this sixth and last section, the florid abundance of spring is heralded with royal, heroic imagery. The first three verses included here indulge this metaphor to great effect, employing standard emblems of the season—sprouting mangos, droning bees, raucous cuckoos and parrots—in images drawn from the court as well as from the battlefield. Verse VI.1, from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*, likens spring to an aggressive warrior, his fatal weapons fashioned from mango shoots and black bees. Verses VI.2 and VI.3, both from the Prākrit anthology *Vajjālagga*, slightly rework this imagery. VI.2 depicts spring as a vanquishing king (also seen in verses from some of the earlier sections), and VI.3 has a lovely parodic feel to it as a parrot, employing a mango shoot as his sceptre, announces the defeat of late winter at the conquering hands of spring.

I follow these with a lengthy sequence of poems from the Sanskrit tradition that provides general descriptions of the season. Verses VI.4-V.11 are all particularly nice examples from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*. As with many Sanskrit poets, the author of the *Ṛtusaṃhāra* seems to have especially favoured the spring season and really bests himself here. Of greatest interest are the poems that employ the colour red—the conventional colour of womanly beauty and fertility in Indian culture in general—in their descriptions of dress (VI.6), of the

brilliant coppery red of newly protruding mango shoots (VI.7), and the sudden blushing of the entire world in poem VI.10, in which the earth is likened to a young bride decked out in her crimson garments. Verses VI.12 and VI.13, both fine examples from the *Śārṅgadharapaddhati,* are much more innovative in their uses of conventional imagery. The former uses the standard trope of the Love God's (Kāmadeva's) five arrows; the poet aims them right at the five senses of young men, addling them with their arousing delights. The latter poem, in my opinion one of the finest in this collection, elegantly compares a flame-tree stamen to the moon's crescent, and then to the sensually curving bow of Kāmadeva.

Verses VI.14-VI.17 are standard descriptions of women preparing themselves for amorous encounters in the spring, all from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*. Verses VI.18-VI.26 all use the animals and insects (particularly cuckoos and bees) that are the harbingers and emblems of the season, as their central images. Verse VI.22, a subtle didactic verse from the *Sārṅgadharapaddhati,* uses the vivid image of a cuckoo dusted with brilliant yellow mango pollen. This image also appears in verse VI.26, a beautiful, long vignette from the Tamil anthology *Kuṟuntokai*. This once again highlights the vast differences in seasonal meanings between the Sanskrit/Prākrit and Tamil poetic universes. The spring in Tamil poetry, *iḷa-vēṉil* (the time of young heat) is associated with the *pālai* context, that of abject separation, and here the heroine responds to her confidante's futile attempts to console her. VI,27, a shorter Tamil

composition from *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu*, compares the gossip rising from an illicit affair to the raucous cries of cuckoos as an angry wife confronts her philandering husband.

Verses VI.28-VI.32 are all fine examples of the confusion and longing of separated women in spring; the first in this sequence is an exquisite verse from the *Gāthāsaptaśatī*. The woman, an innocent young bride, sees no external signs of spring, but her longing alone is a more than adequate indication of its arrival. Verses VI.29-VI.32 reverse this trope somewhat. This sequence of poems is culled from the same decad occurring in the one hundred poems on the *pālai* landscape, found in the Tamil anthology *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu*. Titled *iḷa-vēṉil pattu* (*Ten Poems on the Time of Young Heat [Spring]*), all four incorporate the identical refrain, *avarō vārār tāṉ vantaṉṟē . . . poḻutu* (he has not returned, but the time has come), and embedded in the ellipses is the list of the season's attributes, including those related to human behaviour. This sort of repetition within decads is characteristic of most of the verses found in this collection.

I have paired verse VI.33, also from *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu*, with verse VI.34, the benedictory stanza from the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*, which also serves as the benedictory verse that ends the entire collection. The Tamil poem is spoken by the *cevili-t-tāy*, the heroine's foster mother and confidante, to her *naṟṟāy* (biological mother) to console her with news of her eloping daughter's return. This nicely sets the tone for the final verse, which not only celebrates a rich array of the spring's most famous attributes but also the victory of Kāmadeva as world sovereign—in the end, the Love God, even though conventionally bodiless, wins all mortal battles.

VI.1 His fiery arrows the sprouts
of blooming mangoes,
his humming bowstring a garland of black bees,
Warrior Spring has come, my dear,
to riddle the hearts of men in love with Love.

Ṛtusaṃhāra VI.1

◆

VI.2 Mounted on a horse in forest guise,
the clamour of instruments
provided by the buzzing
of swarms of black bees,
King Spring has arrived,
his cheers of victory
well proclaimed by cuckoos.

Vajjālagga 630

VI.3 Grasping a mango shoot,
Chamberlain Parrot
roams about, proclaiming:
'Steal away,
O king of late winter!
The Earth's been seized
by spring!'

Vajjālagga 635

◆

VI.4 The trees are in flower,
lakes are crammed with lotuses,
women are amorous,
the winds are fragrant,
the nights happy,
and the days delightful:
Everything is lovelier in spring, my dear!

Ṛtusaṃhāra VI.2

VI.5 The spring imparts grace
to the waters of ponds,
to belts studded with jewels,
to the rays of the hare-marked moon,
to bold women,
and to mango trees crowded with blossoms.

Ṛtusaṃhāra VI.3

◆

VI.6 Hastily casting off their heavy garments,
people, their limbs
now love-drunk and idle,
put on thin clothes reddened with lac juice
and scented with incense
of fragrant black aloe.

Ṛtusaṃhāra VI.13

VI.7 Bent low with their clusters of coppery leaves,
their charming branches in bloom
and rustling in the wind,
mango trees incite fierce longing
in the hearts of shapely women.

Ṛtusaṃhāra VI.15

◆

VI.8 Noticing the delightful buds of the mango trees,
their charming blossoms kissed passionately
by maddened bees
and their bowing, tender branches rustled
by gentle breezes,
the hearts of lovers are filled
with sudden longing.

Ṛtusaṃhāra VI.17

VI.9 Having seen the supreme beauty
of the budding blossom clusters
of the amaranth tree
rivalling the lustre of their beloveds' faces,
darling, what sensitive man's mind
would not be troubled
by the falling of the Love God's arrow?

Rtusamhāra VI.18

◆

VI.10 Overspread everywhere
with groves of flame trees
bent low with blossoms rustling in the wind
and resembling a blazing fire,
in spring, the Earth glows suddenly
in her red clothing,
just like a new bride.

Ṛtusaṃhāra VI.19

VI.11 Seeing the mountains,
their foothills adorned
with flowering trees pleasing to everyone,
tablelands resounding
with the calls of gladdened cuckoos,
and their heaps of rock slabs
circled round with nets of lichen,
all the people are filled with joy.

Ṛtusaṃhāra VI.25

◆

VI.12 Spring gifts these five arrows
to the five-arrowed God of Love,
perfect for instantly muddling
the five senses of the young:

Feeling the gentle touch
of the southern breeze,
seeing the mango's fresh shoots,
hearing the cooing of maddened cuckoos,
smelling jasmine's perfume,
and tasting vintage wine.

Śārṅgadharapaddhati 3789

VI.13 A stamen glows
inside a flame-tree bud,
rivalling the moon's sliver
and looking like the Love God's
lac-stamped bow
secreted within a crimson cloak.

Śārṅgadharapaddhati 3794

◆

VI.14 The gourd-shaped hips of wantons
are adorned with fine bark cloth
reddened with saffron dye,
and the rounds of their breasts
with garments stained crimson
with vermilion.

Ṛtusaṃhāra VI.4

VI.15 Fresh *karṇikāra* flowers tucked behind their ears
and *aśoka* and blown buds of fresh jasmine
in their loose, blue-black curls
all enhance the lustre of bold women.

Ṛtusaṃhāra VI.5

◆

VI.16 Relaxing their bodies
stirred up by the God of Love,
the knots of their clothing loosened,
women just long for their lovers
now that they're staying nearby.

Ṛtusaṃhāra VI.8

VI.17 The bodiless God of Love
now manifests in countless ways
in the bodies of women:
as the rolling of their eyes dulled with wine,
as the pallor in their cheeks,
as the firmness in their breasts,
as the slenderness in their waists;
as the fullness in their haunches.

Ṛtusaṃhāra VI.10

◆

VI.18 Drunk on fermented mango sap,
a male cuckoo, maddened with love,
kisses his sweetheart.
A humming bee, too,
sitting on a lotus,
makes sweet talk to his beloved.

Ṛtusaṃhāra VI.14

VI.19 When beautiful young women are dwelling
in the hearts of young men,
are they not cleft by the flame trees,
gleaming like parrots' beaks?
Are they not set afire
by the *karṇikāra*'s blooms?
So why should the cuckoo
kill them with his sweet sayings?

Ṛtusaṃhāra VI.20

◆

VI.20 Upon hearing the low tones
of enraptured male cuckoos
and the soft hums of buzzing, maddened bees,
the modest hearts of even high-born wives
are instantly flooded with shame.

Ṛtusaṃhāra VI.21

VI.21 In spring,
because the snow has ceased to fall,
the blessed wind blows,
rustling through the blooming branches
of the mango tree,
carrying the calls of the cuckoo
in all directions,
and robbing men of their hearts.

Ṛtusaṃhāra VI.22

◆

VI.22 Hidden at the top of the mango tree
and yellowed with the pollen
from its clumps of blooms,
we know the cuckoo from his singing
like we know a good man through his efforts.

Śārṅgadharapaddhati 3784

VI.23 Clinging to the mango's blossom clusters,
the bee ardently kisses them
like a lover his beloved,
thrilled by a new bout of passion.

Śārṅgadharapaddhati 3785

◆

VI.24 A glossy black bee hums
as it hovers on a jasmine bud,
as if blowing a conch to signal
the five-arrowed Love God's invasion.

Śārṅgadharapaddhati 3786

VI.25 Rejoicing in the nectar
of its ample lotus house,
a line of bees drones,
looking like a belt of blue-black gems
circling goddess Spring's waist.

Vajjālagga 633

VI.26 O friend who stays with me
as I suffer from my illness:
You say that he'll come right here;
you tell me to stop fretting.
But how can I stop crying?
Even now,
in this time of young heat
when a black cuckoo
with lovely, gleaming feathers
pecks at fragrant pollen
on a mango branch,
looking like a shining touchstone
rubbed in gold,
I caress my hair now empty of flowers,
tied up in simple bands.

Kuṟuntokai 192

VI.27 They say that yesterday,
you met with a woman,
her smile a row of tender shoots,
in a fragrant grove full of bees
and crammed with fertile flowers.

The gossip is louder
than the ruckus
of spring's black cuckoos,
nestling in the long boughs
of the bottle-flower tree.

Aiṅkuṟunūṟu 369

VI.28 I don't see any mango buds,
Mother-in-law,
and the wind
with that Malabar smell
isn't blowing,

but my longing alone says
that spring has come.

Gāthāsaptaśatī VI.42

◆

VI.29 He has not returned,
but the time has come
when the mulberry tree
with stout branches and black roots
gives off its fragrance
and is buzzing with happy bees.

Aiṅkuṟunūṟu 342

VI.30 He has not returned,
but the time has come
when the red-eyed black cuckoo calls out;
as the trumpet-flower tree blossoms,
its branches lush.

Aiṅkuṟunūṟu 346

◆

VI.31 He has not returned,
but the time has come
when young sprouts blossom forth
and glow like fire,
hiding the limbs of the mango tree
with its withered roots.

Aiṅkuṟunūṟu 349

VI.32 He has not returned,
but the time has come
when men appease their lovers
with honeyed words
as the bright flowers of the neem tree
drift to the ground.

Aiṅkuṟunūṟu 350

◆

VI.33 A messenger has come,
telling us that our girl
is coming back today,
that girl who got married
in the grand season of Spring,
in that time of rare freshness
when dancing creepers
act like women
and embrace
their warrior oaks
and sway.
She's coming with that man of the desert,
his anger cruel, his spear victorious;
his warrior's anklet beautiful.

Aiṅkuṟunūṟu 400

VI. 34 His choicest arrows
beautiful clumps of mango blossoms,
his bow
the best of flame trees,
his bowstring
a swarm of bees,
his white parasol
the white-rayed moon void of its spots,
his rut-mad elephant
the Malaya breeze
and his heralds cuckoos,

may the World Conqueror,
the bodiless God of Love
attended by spring,
grant you a wealth of luck!

Ṛtusaṃhāra VI.28

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. SANSKRIT, OLD TAMIL AND PRĀKRIT PRIMARY TEXTS

Agniveśa. *Carakasaṃhitā*. Revised by Caraka and Dṛḍhabala. With the 'Āyurveda-dīpikā' commentary of Cakrapāṇidatta. Edited by Vaidya Jādavaji Trikamji Āchārya. 4th ed. Kashi Sanskrit Series, vol. 228. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, 1994.

Aiṅkuṟunūṟu Mūlamum Paḻaiyavuraiyum. Edited by U. Vē. Cāmināṭaiyar. Chennai: Dr U. Vē. Cāmināṭaiyar Nūl Nilaiyam, 1980.

Hāla. *Das Saptaçatakam des Hāla*. Edited by Albrecht Weber. Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1881.

_____. *The* Gāthāsaptaśatī *of Sātavāhana with the Commentary of Gaṅgādharabhaṭṭa*. Edited by Paṇḍit Durgāprasād and Kāśīnāth Paṇḍuraṅg Parab. Kāvyamālā, no. 21. Bombay: Nirṇaya Sāgara Press, 1889.

_____. *Haritāmrapītāmbara's* Gāthāsaptaśatī Prakāśika: *A Hitherto Unpublished Commentary on Hāla's* Gāthāsaptaśatī, *IV-VII Śatakas*. Edited with a critical introduction by Jagdish Lal Shastri. Lahore: n.p., 1942.

_____. *Gāthāsaptaśatī*. Edited with introduction and Hindi commentary by Paramānanda Śāstrī. Merat: Prakāśan Pratishthan, 1965.

_____. *Gāthāsaptaśatī (Gāhāsattasaī)*. Kāśī Saṃskṛta Granthamālā, no. 192. Varanasi: *Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series Office*, 1969.

_____. *Hāla's* Gāhākośa (Gāthāsaptaśatī) *with the Sanskrit Commentary of Bhuvanapāla*. Vol. 1. Edited by M.V. Patwardhan. Prākrit Text Series, no. 21. Ahmedabad: Prākrit Text Society, 1980.

_____. Gāthāsaptaśatī *of Sātavāhana Hāla with Sanskrit Chāyā and Commentary by Bhaṭṭa Mathurānāth Śāstrī*. 1933. Reprint, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983.

Kuṟuntokai. Edited with commentary by Po. Vē. Cōmacuntaraṉār. Chennai: Tirunelvēli Tennintiya Caivacittānta Nūṟpatippuk-k-Kaḻakam Limited, 1978.

_____. Edited with commentary by U. Vē. Cāmināṭaiyar. Annamalainagar: Annamalai University, 1983.

The Ṛtusaṃhāra *of Kālidāsa with the Commentary* (The Chandrikā) *of Maṇirāma and the* Śṛṇgāratilaka. Edited by Kāśīnāth Pāṇḍurang Parab. Bombay: Nirṇaya Sāgara Press, 1894.

The Ṛtusaṃhāra *of Kālidāsa*. Edited by Rewā Prasāda Dwivedi. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1990.

Saptaśatīsāra *with* Bhāvadīpikā *of Vema Bhūpāla with the* Chappaṇṇaya-Gāhāo (*Text and chāyā*). Edited by A.N. Upadhye. Shivaji University Sanskrit and Prākrit Series, vol. 3. Kolhapur: Shivaji University, 1970.

Śārṅgadhara. *Śārṅgadharapaddhati*. Edited by Peter Peterson. 1915. Reprint, New Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 1987.

Suśruta. *Suśrutasaṃhitā*. 2 vols. Edited with Hindi commentary by Kavirāj Ambikādutta Shāstrī. 9th ed. Kashi Sanskrit Series, vol. 156. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, 1995.

Vāgbhaṭa. *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya*. 6 vols. Vaidya Sarathy Series, no. 13. Kottayanagaryam: Vaidyasarathimudranalayadhipatina, 1956-78.

Vajjālaggaṃ: A Prakrita Poetical Work on Rhetoric with Sanskrit Version. Edited by Julius Laber. Bibliotheca Indica, vol. 227. Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1914-1944.

2. OTHER TRANSLATIONS

Basak, Radhagovind, trans. *The Prākrit* Gāthāsaptaśatī, *compiled by Sātavāhana King Hāla*. Bibliotheca Indica, vol. no. 295. Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1971.

Bhishagratna, Kaviraj Kunjalal, trans. *Suśrutasaṃhitā*. 2d ed. 3 vols. Chowkhamba Sanskrit Studies, vol. 30. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1963.

Das, Abhinna Chandra, trans. Ṛtusaṃhāra *of Kālidāsa*. Varanasi: Master Khelarilal & Sons, 1962.

Devadhar, C.R., trans. *Poetry*. Vol. 2 of *Works of Kālidāsa*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984.

Hart, George L., trans. *Poets of the Tamil Anthologies: Ancient Poems of Love and War*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.

Jotimuttu, P., trans. Aiṅkuṟunūṟu, *the Short Five Hundred*. Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1984.

Kale, M.R., trans. Ritusamhara *of Kalidas*. Commentary by Shastri Vyankatacharya Upadhye. Bombay: Vaman Yashwant & Co., 1916.

Mehrotra, Arvind Krishna, trans. *The Absent Traveller: Prākrit Love Poetry from the 'Gāthāsaptaśatī' of Sātavāhana Hāla*. New Delhi: Ravi Dayal, 1991.

Nandy, Manish, trans. *The* Ritusumhara *of Kālidāsa*. Calcutta: Dialogue Calcutta Publications, 1970.

Patwardhan, M.V., trans. *Jayavallabha's* Vajjālaggaṃ. Ahmedabad: Prākrit Text Society, 1969.

_____. *The* Gāhākośa *of Hāla*, Part II. New Delhi: B.L. Institute of Indology, 1988.

Pillai, M. Shanmugam, and David E. Ludden, trans. Kuṟuntokai: *An Anthology of Classical Tamil Love Poetry*. Madurai: Koodal Publishers, 1976.

Punekar, Shankar Mokashi, trans. *Kālidāsa's* Ṛtusaṃhāram: *The Cycle of Seasons*. Bombay: Sigma Publications, 1966.

Ramanujan, A.K., trans. *The Interior Landscape: Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967.

_____. *Poems of Love and War: From the Eight Anthologies and the Ten Long Poems of Classical Tamil*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Roberts, John T., trans. *The Seasons: Kālidāsa's* Ṛtusaṃhāra. Tempe, Ariz.: Arizona State University Center for Asian Studies, 1990.

Sharma, Priya Vrat, trans. *Suśruta-saṃhitā: With English Translation of Text and Dalhana's Commentary along with Critical Notes*. Haridas Ayurveda Series, vol. 9. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Visvabharati, 1999-.

Sharma, Ram Karan and Bhagwan Dash, trans. *Agniveśa's* Caraka Saṃhitā: *Text with English Translation and Critical Exposition Based on Cakrapāṇi Datta's* Āyurveda Dīpikā.

Chowkhamba Sanskrit Studies, vol. 94. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1976-.

Vāgbhaṭa. *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya*. 3 vols. Translated by a board of scholars. Indian Medical Science Series, no. 77. New Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1999.

Wilson, H.H., trans. Ritu-samhara *or An Account of Seasons*. Edited by Rewa Prasad Dwivedi. Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1966.

3. SECONDARY SOURCES

Borooah, Anundoram. *Prosody*. Gauhati: Publication Board of Assam, 1975.

Chettiar, A. Chidambaranatha. *Advanced Studies in Tamil Prosody (Being a History of Tamil Prosody up to the Tenth Century* A.D.*)*. Annamalainagar: Annamalai University, 1957.

Elayaperumal, M. *Grammar of* Aigkurunuuru *with Index*. Trivandrum: University of Kerala, 1975.

Hart, George L. *The Poems of Ancient Tamil: Their Milieu and Their Sanskrit Counterparts*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.

_____. 'The Relation between Tamil and Classical Sanskrit Literature.' In *Dravidian Literature*. Vol. 10, fasc. 2 of *A History of Indian Literature*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1976.

Higginson, William J. *The Haiku Seasons: Poetry of the Natural World*. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1966.

Index des mots de la littérature tamoule ancienne. 3 vols. Publications de 1'Institut français d'indologie, no. 37. Pondicherry: Institut français d'indologie, 1967-70.

Ingalls, Daniel H.H., Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, and M.V. Patwardhan, trans. *The* Dhvanyāloka *of Ānandavardhana with the* Locana *of Abhinavagupta*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Jesudasan, C., and Hephzibah Jesudasan. *A History of Tamil Literature*. Calcutta: Y.M.C.A. Publishing House, 1961.

Kane, P.V. *History of Sanskrit Poetics*. 4th ed. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987.

Keith, Arthur Berriedale. *Classical Sanskrit Literature*. Calcutta: Association Press, 1923.

Krishnambal, S.R. *Grammar of* Kuṟuntokai *with Index*. Trivandrum: University of Kerala, 1974.

Krishnamoorthy, K. *Kālidāsa*. Twayne World Authors Series, 208. New York: Twanye Publishers, 1972.

Kulkarni, V.N., ed. *Prākrit Verses in Sanskrit Works on Poetics*. Vol. 1. New Delhi: Bhogilal Leherchand Institute of Indology, 1988.

Kulshreshtha, R.B. 'Source of Kālidāsa's *Ṛtusaṃhāra*.' Parts 1-2. *The Journal of the Ganganatha Jha Research Institute* 22 (November 1965-February 1966): 97–101.

_____. 'Return to Kālidāsa's *Ṛtusaṃhāra*.' Parts 1-4. *The Journal of the Ganganatha Jha Research Institute* 25, (January-October 1969): 111–15.

Lienhard, Siegfried. *A History of Classical Poetry: Sanskrit/Pāli/Prākrit*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984.

Mandal, Kumar Kishore. *A Comparative Study of the Concepts of Space and Time in Indian Thought*. Chowkhamba Sanskrit Studies, vol. 65. Varanasi: The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1968.

Mitra, Arati. *Origin and Development of Sanskrit Metrics*. Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1989.

Mukherji, Amulyadhan. *Sanskrit Prosody: Its Evolution*. Calcutta: Saraswat Library, 1976.

Periakaruppan, Ramasamy. *Tradition and Talent in Caṅkam Poetry*. Madurai: Madurai Publishing House, 1976.

Pisharoti, K.R. 'Kālidāsa's Treatment of Nature in *Ṛtusaṃhāra*.' *The Indian Historical Quarterly* (Calcutta) 22, no. 2 (1948): 134–40.

Raghavan, V. *Ṛtu in Sanskrit Literature*. New Delhi: Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, 1972.

Raja, K. Kunjunni. *Indian Theories of Meaning*. Madras: Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1963.

_____, ed. *The* Ṛtusaṃhāra *of Durlabha with a Commentary*. Adyar Library Pamphlet Series, no. 39. Madras: The Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1969.

Rajam, V.S. *A Reference Grammar of Classical Tamil Poetry*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1992.

Ricoeur, Paul. *Time and Narrative*. 3 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984-.

Sharma, Mukunda Madhava. 'Some Observations on the Authorship of *Ṛtusaṃhāra*.' *Journal of the University of Gauhati* 14, no. 1 (1964): 21–27.

Smith, Brian K. *Classifying the Universe: The Ancient Indian Varṇa System and the Origins of Caste*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Sohoni, S.V. 'Kālidāsa, Hāla Sātavāhana and Candra Gupta II.' *The Journal of the Bihar Research Society* 61, part 2 (1955): 229–44.

Takahashi, Takanobu. *Tamil Love Poetry and Poetics*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995.

Tolkāppiyaṉār. *Tolkāppiyam-Poruḷatikāram*. Translated by E. S. Varadaraja Iyer. Annamalainagar: Annamalai University, 1948.

_____. Tolkāppiyam: *The Earliest Extant Tamil Grammar: Text in Tamil and Roman Scripts with a Critical Commentary in English*. Translated and with a commentary by P.S. Subrahmanya Sastri. Parts 1-3, '*Poruḷatikāram*: Tamil Poetics.' Madras: Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, 1959, 1952, 1956.

_____. Tholkāppiyam *in English with Critical Studies*. Translated and with notes by S. Ilakkuvanar. Madurai: Kural Neri Publishing House, 1963.

_____. *Tolkāppiyam*. Madurai: Cittārtta Publishing House, 1978.

_____. *Tolkāppiyam: Poruḷatikāram*. Edited by Ku. Cuntaramūrtti. With the commentaries of Naccinārkkiniyar and Pērāciriyar. 3 vols. Annamalainagar: Annamalai University, 1985-1986.

_____. *Tolkāppiyam: Poruḷatikāram*. With the commentary of Iḷampūraṇar. 3 vols. Cennai: Tirunelvēli Tennintiya Caiva Cittānta Nūṟpatippu-k-Kaḻakam Limited, 1986.

Varadarajan, Mu. *A History of Tamil Literature*. Translated by E. Sa. Visswanathan. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1988.

Vidyākara, compiler. *Sanskrit Poetry from Vidyākara's* Treasury. Translated with an introduction and notes by Daniel H.H. Ingalls. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1965.

Warder, A.K. *Indian Kāvya Literature*. 6 vols. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972-1988.

Winternitz, Moriz. *A History of Indian Literature*. Translated by Mrs S. Ketkar. Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1927-1960.

Zvelebil, Kamil. *The Smile of Murugan on Tamil Literature in South India*. Leiden: Brill, 1973.

_____. *Tamil Literature. Dravidian Literatures*. Vol. 10, fasc. 1 of *A History of Indian Literature*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974.

_____. *Literary Conventions in Akam Poetry*. Tiruvanmiyur, Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1986.

_____. *Classical Tamil Prosody: An Introduction*. Madras: New Era Publications, 1989.

PENGUIN CLASSICS

TRANSLATIONS AND INTRODUCTION BY

MARTHA ANN SELBY

While the striped frogs croak
and the toads peep,
the rains have begun.
And now, he will be the monsoon guest
of your fine wrists
and ample shoulders.
Driving his tall chariot
with its tinkling bells,
our lover will come back today.
***Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* 468**

Dating from the first to late fourteenth centuries CE, this collection of 188 poems is gleaned from the three literary languages of classical India—Old Tamil, Prākrit and Sanskrit. Martha Ann Selby combines her unique mastery of these languages with her scholarship and poetical skills to offer a pan-Indian flavour of the changing seasons. These poems celebrate the rhythm and beauty of the cycle of time. Nature is portrayed through a range of sensual, sexual and colourful images and allegories. The autumn poems, for example, depict a world washed clean by rains, ready for love, specifically, clandestine love, set in the hills among mists and blooming wild cane at night.

Readers will appreciate the collection's fine poetic quality and be spell[illegible] by the unique beauty of India's six seasons.

EWB
Rs 250.00

BIGGEST LITTLE BOOKSHOP
MADRAS - INDIA
Giggles

Cover photograph by S. Gopinath

A PENGUIN ORIGINAL
Literature
India Rs 250
www.penguinbooksindia.com

ISBN 0-14-100772-9
9 780141 007724